THE RED FLAG AT ARARAT

A. Y. YEGHENIAN

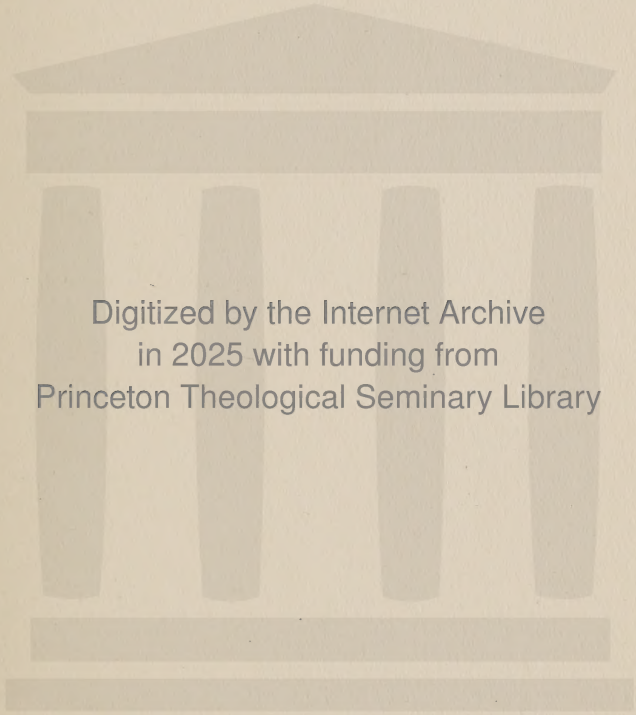
Library of The Theological Seminary
PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY

FROM THE LIBRARY OF
ROBERT ELLIOTT SPEER

DS165
.Y43

For Mrs. Robert E Speer
a friend of my
people and a
friend of the world.
from
A. J. Yeshemain

January, 1934
New York


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

https://archive.org/details/redflagatararat00yegh

THE RED FLAG AT ARARAT

NATIONAL EMBLEM

OF

THE ARMENIAN SOCIALIST SOVIET REPUBLIC

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
DEC 29 1958
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE RED FLAG AT ARARAT

BY

A. Y. YEGHENIAN

THE WOMANS PRESS
NEW YORK

Copyright, 1932, by A. Y. YEGHENIAN

All rights reserved

No parts of this book may be reproduced or translated without the permission of the author.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE GOTCHNAG PRESS, NEW YORK

FOR MY MOTHER, TAKOUHIE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I AM indebted to many of my friends for helping me to make this book possible.

I must acknowledge my debt and my gratitude most especially to Florence G. Cassidy for reading the entire manuscript and for invaluable help in editing; to Mabel Brown Ellis, Lucy Bartlett, and Curtis Lakeman for help in its publication; to Vahan D. Sewny for his help in research in checking historical dates and events; and to Meline Honan, my niece, for untiring and devoted work in typing the manuscript. To Zareh M. Sourian, who designed both jacket and cover, I acknowledge particular indebtedness.

I also wish to express my appreciation for courtesies extended by the *Christian Science Monitor* in permitting me to include in this book some of the material from my articles which were first published by that paper; to Alice Stone Blackwell and to E. P. Dutton and Company for permitting me to reprint from their publications, poems translated from the Armenian.

FOREWORD

THIS is not an exposition of Marxian theory and its workings. Neither does it pretend to be an account of the achievements of the Russian Revolution. I am not a serious student of political economy and it would be a pretension on my part to attempt to analyze a political experiment of such vast size and significance as the Russian Revolution. This is an account of one traveler's experiences. It is a personal account and consciously chosen to be such, for I am persuaded that no author, no matter how objective his approach, can be entirely impersonal at the present time in appraising the Soviet experiment.

The Russian scene is still a rapidly changing landscape. The only true picture is the one which the artist paints as he sees it. So much of the task of the Revolution is still unfinished, so much is as yet just beginning, that it is impossible to subject it to pure scrutiny and scientific conclusion. Is it true to human nature to abandon its lust for power and possession? Is it possible for a generation to be moral without religion? Will security under the patronage of the state make the human being happier? Can a worthwhile culture develop without individual freedom? Will society endure without the discipline and conventionality of marriage? Will the family survive its present dislocation? The wisest man cannot give us the answer to any of these questions. For these reasons, it seems to me, a personal account can be the only honest one.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

PAGE

PRELUDE 1

THE RUSSIAN SCENE 4

- The Ghosts of the Past 5
- The Sight-Seeing Americans 6
- Traveling a la Russe 8
- The Priest and the Hero 11
- A Thousand Years at a Glance 12

ON TO ARMENIA 14

- Traveling Soft 14
- Internationalism in the Corridor 16
- Sight-Seeing at Baku 22
- Tiflis to Erivan 23

YERGIR TRAKHDAVAIR (PARADISE LAND)

AT THE FOOT OF MT. ARARAT 31

- Erivan the Capital 32
- Etchmiadzin the Monastery 40
- New Seals on Ancient Parchments 44

A MINIATURE SOVIET REPUBLIC 48

- Reconstruction Is My Name 49
- Industry and Natural Resources 52
- Nationalism and Nationhood 57

ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE PEOPLE 68

- The Concerns of Soviet Education 70
- High Learning for the Masses 74
- Nationalized Medicine 80
- Socializing the Child 81
- More Light from the Press 84

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

SOCIALIZED LIVING 90
- Social Duty 90
- The House of Improvement 95
- A Day in Court 97
- Love and Marriage 100
- The Marriage and Divorce Bureau 104

HOBNOBBING WITH THE COMMISSARS 108
- The Secretary of the Party 111
- The House of Green Tables 115
- Mother Arax Smiles at Last 118
- The Wise Leader 123
- The Vineyard of the Commissars 131

VISITING WITH THE PEOPLE 137
- On Top of an Old Trunk 137
- A Feast in the Vineyards 138
- A Tour of the Villages 142
- Light of the Morn 151
- Miracles of Communistic Faith 162
- New Villages with Ancient Names 164
- The New Symbol of Armenia 167

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

OPPOSITE PAGE

FRONTISPIECE
National Emblem of the Armenian Socialist Soviet Republic

"THE PANORAMA OF RUGGED CLIFFS" 30
A Village in Zankezour

ETCHMIADZIN 42
"Descent"

A MONK READING THE OLD TESTAMENT 47
In the Garden of the Old Monastery at Etchmiadzin

A TYPICAL VILLAGE SCENE 53
"The Forests Seldom Reach the Top of the Mountains"

UNIVERSAL EDUCATION DAY 79
School Children on Parade

ARAMAYIS YERZINGIAN 108
Vice-President of the Armenian Republic

"MOTHER ARAX" 123
Being Put to Modern Use

SAHAG DER KAPRIELIAN 124
President of the Armenian Republic

ARMENIAN PEASANT GIRL 153
At the Fountain

JAMILE 157
The Kurdish Beauty

SIRMA 160
A Turkish Bride in the Armenian Forests

NEW ARAPKIR 165
Model Village Built by the Armenians of Old Arapkir in America

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

PRELUDE

I WAS bound for Soviet Armenia, a pilgrim and not a tourist. Like the way of all pilgrims, my journey had to be arduous, hence I did not go by the direct route from Marseilles to Batoum by boat and then by train to Erivan. Instead, I chose the northern route. I wanted to enter by the main gate, to have a glimpse of the vast Bolshevist experiment and get my spirit prepared and attuned to Soviet ways before I came to Soviet Armenia, one little "ring" in the great and powerful chain known as the Soviet Union. I therefore journeyed from Kiel to Helsingfors, from Leningrad to Moscow, and on to Erivan, the capital of the Armenian Republic.

There were other pilgrims like myself, and many tourists, on the train which was to transport us from Finland to the Russian frontier. We entered the Soviet Union at Rayayoki at six o'clock on a raw August morning. We were all up half an hour ahead of time to "see the border." At first we saw little peasant huts, then dilapidated wooden dwellings which must have been the pretentious mansions of those who were the privileged in times past.

As we neared the border we saw a Red soldier and a Red flag. The soldier was standing erect, rifle in hand, with immovable face and eyes fixed on the train. It looked as though he must have been stationed there a thousand years. We were disap-

pointed to find that there was no flaming red cloth anywhere on his uniform. He was dressed in the long gray Russian army coat. His cap was trimmed with bright St. Patrick's green and bore the insignia of the Red army, a dark red star with the hammer and the sickle in gold in the center. We learned that he was a boundary guard. His uniform, therefore, was trimmed with green instead of red. And the fluttering Red flag—somehow it did not look fierce and revolutionary, and did not give us the secret delight of feeling that we were in the presence of some imminent danger.

Nevertheless we made ourselves feel the thrill we imagined we ought to have, and stared at the Red soldier as hard as we might. But he did not reciprocate. He did not seem interested in strangers from great capitalistic countries who were coming to see his land. A French soldier would have winked and a German guard would have stiffened under our glances, but not so the Red soldier. He refused to share our thrill, neither was he aroused by our stares. He was one hundred per cent indifferent.

We expected some excitement at the customs at least. Perhaps some woman's pretty things would be thrown out. Cigarettes, candy, sugar, films, silk stockings, all these could not be brought in beyond a certain prescribed limit, and surely some one would bring in more than her allowed share. But here again we were greeted with indifference. The customs officials took no notice of us as persons. Everything moved in orderly fashion. Numbered porters in blue denim carried our bags from the train to the customs building. The customs officials opened the

bags and felt the goods with their hands in a superficial manner. They looked at our books with interest and attention, they counted our dollars in private rooms and gave us receipts, but of the "searching" which every one had feared there was none. The bags were closed and the porters took them back to the train. We paid them the fixed fee and that was all.

THE RUSSIAN SCENE

THE station of Leningrad gave us our first remote taste of the great Revolution. When the train pulled in we saw many people huddled outside the station, eating lunch, taking naps, seated on top of bundles waiting for trains, and generally looking as if they were settled there to spend the rest of their lives. We knew that these people could not have been there in the old days.

The crowd was mixed and haggard and in every variety of costume. Nowhere else in a European city of like size could such a sight be seen. There were former bourgeoisie in worn European suits; soldiers and officers; workers with long blue denim blouses over pants; here and there a smart embroidered linen blouse over knickers and boots. There were the Russian peasants of whom we had read in books—with disheveled hair, long beards, dirty and in rags, all of them looking like the pictures of Rasputin in peasant garb. We saw Lenin's picture everywhere, in all sizes and in all poses, and realized that none of this could have been thus in days past. Only twenty years ago the feet of tall and beautiful ladies in jewels and pearls and Paris gowns, would have trod this station floor; handsome officers would have come and gone, clicking their heels and kissing ever so gracefully the hands of the beautiful ladies; fascinating gentlemen and aristocrats would have been riding to the station in lovely horse-drawn carriages!

Our guide was the niece of a former countess whose husband is a well known figure in Russian literature. She was young, pretty, and twenty-three. She spoke good English and excellent French, both of which she had learned before she was ten years of age, when the Revolution broke out. She met us with enthusiasm and gaiety and for the first few moments gave us the impression that she was like a jolly American college girl. But the moment she stopped speaking her eyes became pools of tragedy and when she thought she was not being watched she gazed at our hats and our shoes and our stockings with a terrible yearning.

The Ghosts of the Past

We drove through the great Nevski Prospect, now named Avenue October Twenty-five, after the October Revolution. We saw the Winter Palace on the banks of the Neva, and all the small palaces and the great mansions which now have lost their pride and their good looks. To our surprise we saw here and there statues of Peter the Great and the Tsars and the princes left standing and unspoiled. Our guide pointed out to us a statue of Tsar Alexander III. He stands between two murdered Tsars, his father, Alexander II, who was assassinated by a revolutionist in the streets of St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) in 1881, and his son, Tsar Nicholas II, the last Tsar, who met his death at the hands of the Bolsheviks in the Revolution of 1917. For some reason or other the Bolsheviks have chosen Alexander III as typifying the autocracy of the Russian rulers, rather than the last Tsar Nicholas. They

have preserved his statue which stands in the middle of the public square outside the Nikolayevski railway station (now called the October station) and they have honored it with a special inscription credited to the proletarian poet Demyan Byedni.

"My father and my son were assassinated and I have met a fate worse than theirs in their graves—a scarecrow standing here before the people, before the people who will nevermore be slaves."

The Hotel Europa also gave us a vision of the ghosts of the past. Everything about it suggested "what once was." We were given a spacious suite of two rooms and bath for the three of us. Long mirrors covered the walls and luxurious furniture, dressers, table, vanity and brass beds, filled the large bedroom. Precious but worn-out tapestry covered the armchairs and the settee in the antechamber. We revelled in the thought that our suite might easily be made into four rooms, and then prices could perhaps be half the rate charged now. Fewer persons would then be compelled to sleep in railway stations.

There was music in the dining room of the hotel, and in the evening there was dancing for the foreigners. The orchestra burst into Rudy Vallee's University of Maine Stein Song and the Americans trotted to its stirring melody. The present rulers of Russia—workers, peasants, communists—watched the foreigners dance.

The Sight-Seeing Americans

The city of Leningrad, which was Petrograd during the first days of the Revolution and Saint Peters-

burg in the days of the Tsars, sits on the banks of the Neva, gloomy and depressed and shabby. She looks the sum total of all that has survived the Revolution—the grand buildings, the ladies of the old bourgeoisie and aristocracy whom one could easily recognize on the streets with dresses and hats in pre-revolutionary style, fine features, weary faces and sad eyes, as if always in deep contemplation.

There were eight days of mad sight-seeing for us in Leningrad. Every morning the leader of the tour and the guide submitted a list of things from which we might choose. Here again we met with some disappointment. We expected to be watched by the *Gay-Pay-Oo* [secret police]. We wanted to feel a sense of fright and danger behind our foreign security. We expected to be told to see this and that; to be told that we could not see that which we most wanted to see and ordered to see that which we did not wish to see. But again, like the Red soldier, the secret police, too, were indifferent, and seemed to be neglectful of us. We chose every day what we most wished to see. Often arrangements for seeing a building or a factory or a prison had to be made with the officials on the spot after the group got there. Every day we could add to the list whatever any one of us had specially in mind.

"Which of these would you like to see today?" we were asked by our guide at breakfast, and she submitted the list:

A workers' kitchen
The museum of the Revolution
The park of Culture and Rest
The big textile factory

The children's nursery
A workers' rest house
The Hermitage Art Gallery
The Winter Palace
The Smolny Institute
The Church of the Resurrection
St. Isaac's Cathedral
The fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul
A typical court in session
Tsarskoye Syelo

We wanted to be original and not choose the things that every other tourist wants to see, but we submitted to the fate common to all tourists and saw them all.

Traveling a la Russe

The ado about the "savage" Russian custom of mixed traveling receives more attention from American travelers than it merits. This excitement about mixed travel in Russia comes from the fact that Americans usually travel in the expensive wagon-lits, when they travel by night in Europe. Distances are short and few take sleepers anyway. Moreover, the European trains are not crowded. It is usually possible for four women traveling together to obtain one compartment when it becomes necessary to travel second class. With the extremely crowded trains in the Soviet Union, however, it is impossible to pay attention to such niceties as separate compartments for men and women. In Russia Americans are for the first time getting acquainted with middle-class European travel and when confronted with the ne-

cessity of traveling in this way, the reputed courage and independence of the American woman vanishes completely. Such an adventure, it seems, touches the depths of the "Anglo-Saxon ideal" of travel morality.

Nine of us were going to Moscow, five women and four men. We found that we were scattered in various combinations through several compartments. Two young American women were in a compartment with two Russian men, a middle-aged woman was in with a priest and a Russian woman.

Perched on the upper berth of the compartment, the middle-aged lady began to cry. She protested that she would not sleep a wink that night. The guide tried to get places changed before the train pulled out, since we should be unable to communicate later with any one, but no one moved. The Russians sat silently and in amazement watched the excitement of the "cold-blooded" Americans. The two young American girls had come out into the corridor and vowed that they would not go inside their compartment, as they were sure that the two men in their section were drunk. One of these men was a young tall fellow who kept his back to us all the time. He stood glued to the window, looking out at the station, and gave not the slightest sign of interest in or attention to what was going on. The other was a man past forty, with small blue Slavic eyes and typical Russian features. His head was closely shaved according to the latest Bolshevistic style adopted from the Germans and it lent his face an expression of fierceness. He sat and looked at us with uninterested detachment.

Finally the guide decided to approach this man and ask if he would be willing to change places with one of the ladies. In this way, the three American women would neutralize the one young man, who continued to look out of the window and afforded no opportunity for communication. The man with the shaven head, much to the surprise of the Americans, immediately consented to change his place. He rose and gathered his two bundles and one small bag and walked out to the other compartment. But no sooner had he stepped in there than out he rushed with his possessions, as if chased by a demon. He fell into his former seat, before our American lady could take a step.

By this time the train was ready to pull out and our guide had to leave us, without an explanation of the man's conduct. The protesting and whimpering of the Americans went on as the train moved. The girls were for a moment positive that the man was drunk, but then they noticed that his eyes were blazing with some emotion incomprehensible to them. At that moment the young fellow stationed at the window turned and said in English, "Have no fear; this man is not a drunkard, he is a man of principle." At the sound of these English words in a Russian world our American pilgrims at once took heart. "Well, if you could speak English, why did you not speak to us before?" demanded the girls; "then we should not have feared."

"I wanted to stay here and make your acquaintance, and if I spoke I was afraid you would have asked me and my companion to move," he said, with the frankest and most innocent smile. He was very

handsome, but somewhat tragic looking, and we could see at once that he came from another class. Gradually, as our friendship warmed, we learned some of his story. He was from one of Russia's old families. He was twelve at the time of the Revolution and had not forgotten the English and French his governess had taught him. He yearned for news from the outside world. He was going to Moscow on business. The girls took to him violently and now begged him to ask the man with the clean-shaven head why he had changed his mind so suddenly about giving his place to our traveling companion.

The Priest and the Hero

The man then poured out a volley of Russian, with eyes smouldering and flashing. He said that he had seen a priest in the next compartment, and that he would not sleep with a "devil" in the same room. He was an old communist. He bore on his left breast the Red Insignia—the highest decoration of Bolshevik honor for high achievement in the Revolution. His wife had been killed by a priest during the revolution. She was shot in five places. His blood boiled at the sight of a priest. He touched his revolver and said, addressing us all, "I would have killed the priest during the night without realizing what I was doing."

The girls became very enthusiastic and sympathetic!

"Oh, how wonderful!" they exclaimed. "He is a man of principle and we are glad to be his traveling companions!"

When this was translated to him he became genial and asked questions about America. He was high in Soviet councils and was the manager of a big factory in Moscow. He urged us to come to see his factory. He said he might be sent to America to study factory methods. We exchanged addresses. Then came evening tea, for which every one has to carry his own sugar. We yearned for tea—but we had no sugar. The Bolshevik hero then produced a large lump of hard sugar such as they have always used in Russia. He tried to break small pieces of it for our tea with his penknife but the sugar was very hard. Then he produced his revolver and shot the sugar to pieces with his gun. We were happy that he had used the gun to give us sugar instead of shooting the priest at night!

A Thousand Years at a Glance

How different Moscow is from Leningrad! It is old but not shabby. When you are in Moscow you know you have come far to a distant city, and you know that it is a Russian city. It is now the impregnable stronghold of the Revolution and the capital of the U.S.S.R. People seem better dressed here and more buoyant. All the thrills of Russian history and the Revolution are more marked here. The Kremlin hill, with the strange wall surrounding it and the Red Square in front, gives us Russian history of a thousand years in one glance. There are more cathedrals and more churches here with mosaic domes and gold spires. Mohammedan mosque and Byzantine church architecture are combined in weird style to make Moscow the city where the "East" of

Peter the Great now meets the "West" of the Bolsheviks.

In Moscow, outside a few places of inescapable historic interest, such as Tolstoi's house, the Kremlin, a cathedral or two, we concentrated on seeing the works of the Revolution. We chose courts, prisons, factories, workers' kitchens, as conducted by the new masters.

ON TO ARMENIA

All of this, bits of the old and the new Russia, gave me some measure of preparedness. I was now ready to cut myself loose from the tourist agency which had brought me there. I obtained permission from the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs for an extension of my visa and set myself en route to Armenia.

Most tourists go to Tiflis on the International Wagon-Lits or down the Volga by boat. It is in the regular "soft" (second class) or "hard" (third class) travel with the people, however, that one gets the real native flavor.

Traveling Soft

"Intourist" in Moscow bought my ticket—soft wagon on the direct train from Moscow to Tiflis, a journey of three and a half days. There was a change at Tiflis for a direct train to Erivan, a trip of ten hours. The whole journey from Moscow to Erivan, which is about the same distance as from New York to California, cost eighty-five rubles—forty-two dollars and fifty cents at the high rate of exchange.

The first person I spoke to on the train was Natalie. In the morning she and I found ourselves looking out of the same window at the vast plains of the Russian land. Soon I found that Natalie's eyes were not on the plains but were hovering longingly over

my beret, my stockings and my sweater. It happened that I had had to replenish my small outfit from the European market before starting for Russia. My beret came from Paris, my stockings were heavy German ones bought at Bremen, and my sweater came from Interlaken. But Natalie took it for granted that they were the latest American fineries from New York. I tried my stock of twenty words of Russian on her and found that she spoke French.

"Vous êtes Américaine, Madame?"

I nodded contentedly in the affirmative.

"Heureuse, heureuse," she said somewhat sadly.

"But you will soon become like the Americans—look at all this progress you are making. This suffering is only temporary, is it not?"

"Yes," she said, "but the temporary is too prolonged! I don't want to wait any longer. I can't; I want to enjoy things now."

Natalie was an aspiring young poet with dreamy eyes, just in her nineteenth year. Her mother, who accompanied her, came from the middle class bourgeoisie of old Russia. They were bound for Baku. Natalie had learned her French from her mother and considering the devastating effect of the Revolution on the French language in Russia, the mother had been a good teacher.

The slow-moving train through the vast grain tracts of the Ukraine offered ample compensation for the monotony of the scenery by building up many valuable acquaintances. In my division of the soft wagon there were two young Tartars from the Republic of Azarbaidjan; an English gentleman, Sir

B——, and his niece, owners of extensive tea plantations in India, who were en route to Tiflis to advise the government on tea plantation experiments in the Caucasus; a Russian botanist from Leningrad; a Georgian engineer; an Ukrainian government official; an Ukrainian lady; and an Armenian writer from Moscow.

Internationalism in the Corridor

After the evening meal this motley population gathered in the corridor and plunged into the great national Russian sport—animated conversation on the principles of capitalism vs. Marxism. Every one spoke in the language he knew best, so that at one time I found myself conversing in all the four languages I could speak, English with the Englishman, French with Natalie and her mother, Turkish with the Tartars, and Armenian with the Armenians! The Georgian engineer, the Ukrainian government official and the Tartar youth were communists, members of the Party; the rest were "loyal" in varying shades and degrees, but all were genuinely interested in the new experiment and wanted to see it succeed.

I said to the Ukrainian official through the Armenian writer: "Natalie here wants to enjoy life. She and her mother have suffered for the Revolution, why should they not enjoy the fruits thereof during their lifetime?"

"They will in time," said the official. "Didn't the men and women in early American history make many bitter sacrifices to found a new nation? Did skyscrapers and silk stockings exist in 1700?"

Then the Georgian engineer spoke in Russian to

Natalie and she translated to me in French.

"It is not we who are depriving Natalie of silk stockings, it is your America and all the capitalistic countries which are bent on destroying us and will not give us credits with which to buy easily while we are building up our technical advance."

The Ukrainian official said, through the Armenian writer: "Besides, when we have silk stockings, all will have them, not just the aristocracy as in England, or the wealthy bourgeoisie as in France and America. The workers don't wear silk stockings now in any country, do they?"

"Of course they do," I replied. "All the working girls in America wear silk stockings. In fact we do not ordinarily have cotton stockings on sale in New York!" I appealed for a witness to the Armenian writer who had been in America.

Natalie was simply astounded.

"It is true," said my witness; "all the working girls in America are well dressed and all women are beautiful."

This made an impression, and for a moment silence prevailed.

Then Sir B—— spoke up in English and I translated to Natalie in French and she translated to the rest in Russian.

"What these people do not understand is that we do try to raise the level of the workers and the common people. I have sixteen thousand coolies on my tea plantations working for me. They live like animals and know no better. I have tried hard to arouse them. I have promised them rewards—a cash bonus to each individual who would be willing

to comply with certain simple elementary rules of hygienic living—but they are too ignorant and too lazy to want to make the effort. That is what the British do for the natives of their colonies, but these people call us imperialist for that."

At this point every one tried to talk at the same time. A door opened and some one shouted from the top of her berth.

"That is the capitalistic game, to blow dust into the eyes of the workers and keep them submissive."

This was translated to me in Armenian and I rendered it in English to Sir B——.

Sir B—— chuckled and said nothing.

"But really," said Sir B——'s niece, "is it not all the same, finally, whether the state helps the worker, or the capitalists? The point is to help every man get a decent living, is it not?"

There was great disagreement at this. The Tartar communist said to me in Turkish, "But England will always look down upon the Indians as blacks, as slaves; slaves can never have the opportunity for equality. We have also solved the nationality and the race problem here."

When this had been translated into English and then into Russian, every one became keenly interested in the nationality problem.

"How about Tartar-Armenian feuds?" I asked in Turkish. Sir B—— was pleased and the Tartar youth pretended to be surprised.

"What feuds?" he asked, making a visible effort to pretend that he had utterly forgotten about them.

"The massacres," I said.

"Ooooh, the massacres! Tartar-Armenian feuds,"

he laughed. "Even the old ladies have forgotten them!"

"Feuds of five hundred years' standing," I said, "how could they be forgotten in ten years?"

"Even less than ten years," he said emphatically, "for we have been building here only the last five or six years. But that is the miracle of communism," he concluded triumphantly.

"But," I asked in Armenian, addressing myself to all, "if you believe in equality, then why the dictatorship of the proletariat? Why is the worker made the ruler instead of making him rule equally with all the other classes, the intelligentzia, for instance?"

"Because the worker is the majority," shouted two or three together in identical words.

"Coming back to Natalie," I said, "why can't you slow up your technical advance a little bit? Why do you have to go so fast and impose these terrific hardships on these young people?"

"Because," they all answered in a chorus, "we must succeed quickly, or the enemy will overtake us. We are isolated, we are surrounded by the capitalistic world and we must be ready before they are ready to attack us."

"But," I insisted, "why should one generation suffer for another? Let each generation save itself."

At this point a woman, awakened by our noise, put on a sweater and joined the party. She was just in time to catch the drift of the conversation.

"This generation is lost everywhere but we will at least save the next," she said with a yawn.

Every one turned and laughed. Another door opened and some one shouted from the top of his berth:

"Clothes are a trifle. We shall have them soon enough. We shall soon surpass America."

Again laughter and cheers! What amazed me most in this type of pastime, which we had night after night, was that no one objected to the noise we made, no matter how far into the night it lasted; on the contrary, those who had retired and gone to sleep, woke up after the first doze and, finding the conversation too interesting to miss, joined in.

After staying awhile in the country I found that this was typical of the "awakeness of the people" which the Revolution had brought about. They were all too keenly interested in what was going on about them, life was too bare, too throbbing, to allow time for relaxation or to create a desire for retirement and privacy.

Natalie herself was a vacillating creature. She, unlike the revolutionary communist youth, was introspective. She was interested in romance, in lyric poetry. That would not do for communism. But she was young and forward-looking, and when the enthusiasts spoke for socialism, she was with them. She was serious-minded and therefore could not help but take an interest in the new social order and be cheered when the achievements of the Revolution were cited. She was easily aroused and forgot her privations when the general weal of the people was held before her, in return for the sacrifices that were demanded of her.

Not so with Natalie's mother! She would listen and say nothing. She was not interested in the throbbing present, she was too absorbed in the dead past.

In the course of the next few days the mother turned one by one to everything Sir B——'s niece and I possessed. She offered to buy at high prices. Her husband was a bank official in Baku. They had money. She wanted beret, sweater, stockings, suitcase, underwear. Unfortunately I had been misled by general rumors that too many pieces of personal baggage would not pass the Russian customs and I had taken with me the barest necessities.

Natalie's mother pled with us: "You will go out again and will buy everything you want. Think of us. You will be doing us a great service, for we have no way of buying anything."

I said to the Ukrainian official: "How tragic is this world we live in! Here is your huge land, a vacuum, ready to swallow any amount of earthly goods any one has to sell, and in the outside world other countries are glutted with goods they cannot sell. In Europe and America the shopkeeper worships the ground on which the customer walks. In Switzerland I was bewildered when a salesgirl took me around the block to the manager's private apartment to try on the two-and-a-half dollar sweater I was to buy; and in Bremen, when I finished buying two pairs of stockings, the manager came out of his office and shook hands with me in appreciation! And now here is Natalie's mother begging us to sell her our simple necessities."

He laughed. "Yes, yes," he said, "there is your capitalistic world which is condemning itself to death without any help from us!"

At Rostov two officers of the Red army walked into the dining car. Officers of the Armenian army

they were! Tall and dark, they looked very handsome in the smart uniform of the Red army. Though young, each had already the rank of Commandant in the Armenian division of the Red army. I noticed that one of them wore a small insignia on his left breast, in tiny Armenian characters, H.S.KH.H.—*Hayasdani Sotzialistagan Khorhrtayin Hanrabedutun* [the Socialist Soviet Republic of Armenia]. This meant, I learned after talking with him, that he was also a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Council of the Workers' and the Peasants' Deputies.

Sight-Seeing at Baku

We stopped to go sight-seeing in Baku, the capital of Azarbaidjan. Baku is known as the "oil well" of the Soviet Union. It has kept much of its old color as a trade center at the southeastern corner of the old Russian Empire. Persian merchants in native costume still go to Europe by way of Baku.

This city has a large Armenian population. In fact, it was built by the Armenian traders between the East and the West. Every good-looking large building in the city was built by and once belonged to the Armenian bourgeoisie, but at present all belong to the Tartar government. Baku's population, made up of Tartars, Armenians, Russians, Turks and Persians, is even more mixed than that of any other city, but the present owners of the city are the Tartar natives of the Republic of Azarbaidjan. Here the old Tartar feuds and battles are now stilled, to give place to the learning of the a-b-c's of communism. A few young leaders are already try-

ing to master some of the advanced doctrines of communism, such as "the universal brotherhood of the workers of the world" and "racial equality," theories of life that are even more foreign and strange to a people who combine Tartar blood with Mohammedanism in religion. Here under Soviet orders the "wolf and the lamb" have been made to lie down together in peace and each has learned, or been made to "do the trick," in a remarkably short time. The young Tartar communist invited me to stop longer and really to visit Baku.

"You will be dizzy from the progress you will see," he said.

But Tiflis was the city where I wanted to linger.

Tiflis to Erivan

Tiflis is the last stop on the direct route south from Moscow. It is the capital of Georgia and also the capital of the Trans-Caucasian Federation, more or less an international city with a population chiefly made up of Georgians, Armenians, Russians, Tartars, and a few other mixed races. It, too, was built largely by the old Armenian oil and sugar kings and the Armenians still make up a high percentage of its population. Looking over the city from the heights surrounding it, one can easily detect the numerous Armenian churches with hooded spires in every section of the city, and especially in clusters in the Armenian sections. I was fascinated by this city and finding that I could get along with my Armenian and Turkish, stayed longer than I had planned.

Tiflis retains something of its old glory to a greater extent than do Leningrad and Moscow. It

used to be a gay and wicked city, with many Georgian dancing beauties in its night cafés entertaining the old nobility in their drinking orgies. Gone are the night orgies and gone are the dancing beauties, but the tall handsome Georgians—they are the handsomest in all the Union—can be seen on the streets in the native Georgian costume. The older women still walk the streets in the picturesque Georgian headdress, a white tulle veil over a black velvet band across the forehead and lovely artificial curls which dangle over the ears from under the band. The men wear the warriors' edition, one might say, of the Russian peasant blouse, with very loose shirred sleeves above high cuffs. It is of expensive broadcloth (and newly made, too). Rifle pockets on both sides of the chest, a leather belt, military breeches with high leather boots, and a high lambskin cap complete the whole. This rather heavy costume is worn by all native dwellers of Tiflis even on the hot sunny days of the southern summer and fall, and is most becoming to the tall Georgian, who has the natural military gait to go with his costume. There are also the officers of the Red army, Georgian and Trans-Caucasian Division, running about in their Cadillacs and Buicks. They look very striking in the olive-khaki and red-trimmed uniform of the Red army.

It is taken for granted that a Georgian must be much better dressed than a Russian or any other nationality in the Union cares to be. The outward appearance of the people who walk the streets in Tiflis is very different from that which one sees in Leningrad, and immediately strikes the eye of the

traveler. The Georgian love of beauty in outward appearance is traditional. It seems to have overcome the exigencies of the Five Year Plan, at least in the matter of dress. "The Georgians would much sooner starve than go shabby," the Armenians will all testify. Not that you see Paris or New York styles here, but although in no other city of the Soviet Union can a native woman be seen in immaculate white crêpe de chine blouse and long skirt, scores of them can be found on the streets of Tiflis.

The tourist who stops at Tiflis will hurry to see the sights. He will be taken first of all to "Zakes," the huge hydro-electric plant built on the main river just outside Tiflis. Lenin's life-sized statue stands there in characteristic pose, with raised finger. On the pedestal one reads the inscription, "Successful socialism can be built only on successful electrification." The average American tourist in Tiflis also insists upon paying a visit to Stalin's mother and taking pictures of her. I was told by an Armenian native of Tiflis that the Americans have either made up or accepted a story made up for their benefit about Stalin's mother, and every American who visits the old lady invariably asks the interpreter-guide whether it is true. This story is to the effect that Stalin's mother, being a woman of simple peasant origin, knew only of her son's great rise to power and necessarily conceived of it in terms of the old empire. When she was taken to Moscow to see her son she exclaimed, upon seeing him attired in simple garb, wearing his Georgian blouse, "What kind of a king is this without a crown?" One can easily see how an American would love this story. "The truth

is, however," the Armenian said, "Stalin's mother, while simple and uneducated, is a very intelligent old woman who has followed her son's career through his years of hard struggle and tremendous risks, and understands perfectly well that his is a kingdom without a crown!"

The most interesting things in Tiflis are the old sulphur baths and the market place. From early morning till dark, men and women stand in a long line waiting for their turn to reserve rooms and lockers in the baths built in the old Roman style. You can share their experiences by taking your bundle under your arm and joining the long cue. It is then easy to strike up a conversation. Or go to the old market place where the peasants are still allowed to bring their products in small quantities—cheese, butter, eggs, fruit and poultry—to sell them at individual prices. You can manage a mild bargain with them and follow it up by a conversation about marketing their products under Soviet rule. There is much that can be learned without much being said on either side. Most of these people in the market place speak their ideas according to their temperament. The cautious souls prick up their ears and catch instantly the drift of your "innocent questions." The bitter ones speak rather fearlessly, perhaps feeling that they have nothing much to lose thereby. In the south the complaint always was about the lack of clothing material. In the north it was always lack of food, for there they have already learned to dismiss the matter of clothing as a "trifle."

The train from Tiflis to Erivan was full of Ar-

menians. Everywhere trains are piled high with traveling peasants and workers, with all their earthly goods. It is as if a great earthquake had rudely awakened people from their ancient sleep and they are now moving on and on to see what they can see of this new earth.

In the "soft-wagon" compartment next to ours were the two Armenian officers from Rostov, an Armenian professor of medicine from the University of Moscow, and a communist youth from Erivan. The Armenians in my compartment were a strange mixture of class representation. There was an old lady in black who lay still in her berth and did not mix in the conversation for a long while. She apparently tried to hide her identity but she was recognized to be a member of the few surviving families of old Armenian nobility. There was a communist youth of twenty-one, who held a responsible position in the organization of Young Communists in Armenia; an Armenian writer of note from Moscow whose parents were of the old proud bourgeoisie; and a traveler from America.

Three hours after leaving Tiflis we reached the boundaries of the Armenian Republic at Sadskhlou. The boundaries within the whole Union are free of customs and passport inspection. The only difference immediately noticeable is the change in language and in the signs at the stations.

The thought of the Armenian frontier stirred my childhood conception of the unattainable dream known as "free Armenia." That conception was an extremely emotional one for all Armenians who, like my family, were born outside and lived outside its

historic boundaries. I betrayed some of the old emotions which now so strangely and unexpectedly moved me. But the communists are very practical patriots. To them the thought of nationality is no source of emotional upheaval. They do not encourage the cult of the soil or of language because it happens to be one's own. They only accept these as inevitable forms of historic development and allow cultivation of nationality for one purpose only—to be used as a ready channel for the triumph of communism and the brotherhood of the workers of the world! In such a world they see the utmost development of the self-determining cultural groups as being no impediment to the economic unity of the whole.

Now in Communistland one does as the communists do even more than in Rome one does as the Romans do! So I had to take calmly what was to me a very exciting and moving event—crossing the border between Georgia and Armenia.

The officers and the communist boys laughed good naturedly at my enthusiasm. I could see, however, that beneath their nonchalant exteriors they were pleased, and were themselves not indifferent to the warmth of possession.

At midnight we arrived at the station named Sanahin. One of the most celebrated monasteries of Armenia, dating from the fifth century, is located in this village on the slope of a plateau. The old lady, who up to this moment had lain very still, stirred at the mention of this name. To her it was the fount of countless memories. She stood at the window and called to me, to point out the dark hooded spires of the monastery, built in the old Armenian

style of architecture. She had many a tale to tell about this ancient seat of Christianity in Armenia, of the thousand churches of Ani*, of the legend of the golden apple on the ancient bridge which no one would steal! She spoke in low tones and in French. She wanted to avoid the attention of the communist youth. She wanted to hide her agitation at the sight of the old monastery, which is the symbol of things religious and the past.

The officers and the young communists, on the other hand, were much excited by the sight of new construction going on in the valley. They called to me from the other window to see the great hydro-electric plant which is being built at the cost of eleven million rubles.

How sharp the gulf was between the old princess and the communist youth! How many generations separated the princess from the young communists? I asked myself. It was not one, nor two, nor three. This separation could not be measured by generations.

At midnight a civil engineer walked into our compartment with his suitcase. He had no place reserved and all the berths were taken, so he sat on top of his suitcase and dozed off for a while. Since I did not wish to sleep I offered him my place. I wished to see all that could be seen of the land of Armenia and had decided to keep vigil at the window till morning. But when he learned that I was from America he, too, came out into the corridor.

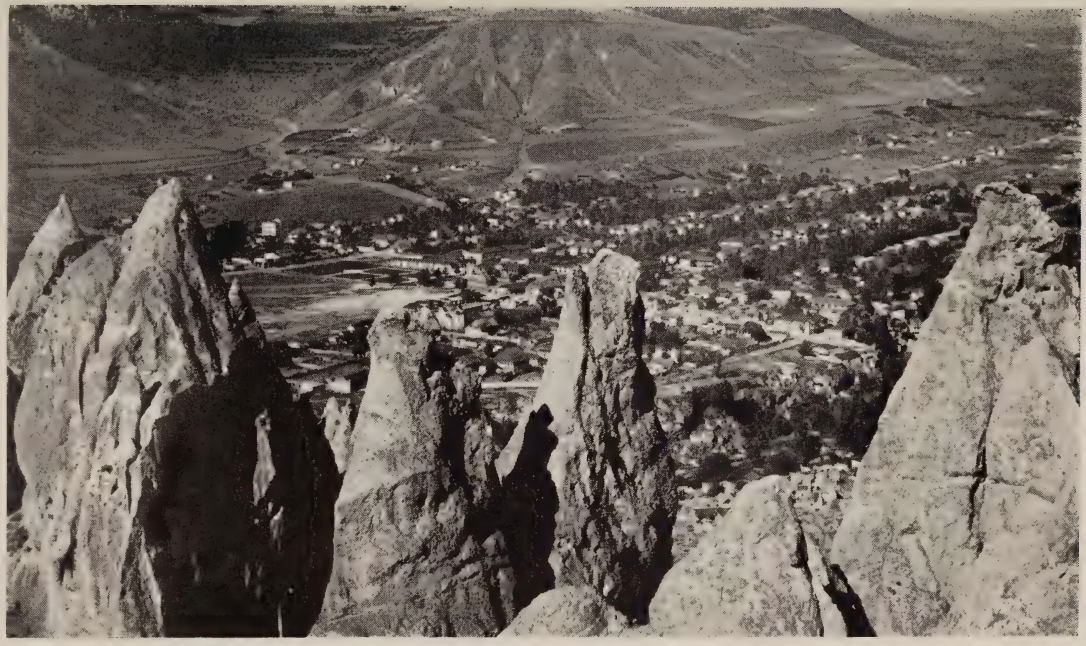
He wanted to know what we thought of communism.

---

* Ancient capital of Armenia.

"It is such a pity!" he said with the utmost naïveté. "America is all ready for communism with its advanced technique. All it needs is a little change in administration."

The valley of Lori, through which the train passes after leaving Sanahin, is renowned for its scenic beauty and the fertility of its soil. We passed through it in the white light of the full moon, which cast a dazzling, unearthly beauty on the panorama of rugged cliffs and wooded hillside around us. The heavy body of the train, creeping along slowly, made the thought that I was going through the free land of Armenia unreal to me! From the "hard wagon" next to ours the boys crowded to the platform and sang wild mountain songs.



"THE PANORAMA OF RUGGED CLIFFS"

A Village in Zankezour

YERGIR TRAKHDAVAIR
"PARADISE LAND"

AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT ARARAT

In song and story the Armenians have called their homeland *Yergir Trakhdavair*—"Paradise Land." For six hundred years Armenia's poets lived under foreign skies, voluntary or forced exiles in Egypt, in France, in Syria, in India, in Greece. To every Armenian in exile a politically free Armenia had become as unattainable a dream as is a heavenly paradise to ordinary mortals. Was it this unattainableness which made the ancient Armenians think of their land as paradise, or was it distance that lent enchantment?

The songs and poems of the past century, which were written during the most oppressive period of Armenian history, invariably hovered about the theme of the sorrow and despair of the "exile" away from home, yearning for the sun, the skies, the birds and the rivers of the native land which was "paradise" because it was "home."

The song which by reason of its great popularity became a kind of national anthem for the politically disinherited Armenians, gave expression to this despair, yearning and hope.

Hayasdan, O Paradise land,
Thou the cradle of the race of man,
Thou my native land!

My heart is aflame with thy magic name!
On thee I wait, in thee I hope,
In thee, in thee,
Hayasdan, O Paradise land!*

The dream of the poets for a free Armenia has at last come into being under Soviet rule. This ancient land is now one of the federated republics of the U. S. S. R., and as one link in the powerful chain feels herself as strong as the chain itself.

Erivan the Capital

At the foot of Mount Ararat is spread Erivan, the capital of the Armenian State. The station at Erivan is a fair-sized white building vis-à-vis with Mount Ararat. We had to wait for carriages at the station. As everywhere in the Soviet Union, places are crowded and things cannot be had at any price. There were too many persons arriving and too few vehicles to carry them. Waiting did not yield us any practical results as to vehicles, but it gave us a chance to sit on our luggage and take in the scene around us.

Across the way under the trees a Turkish peasant family was spread out. The man was dressed in typical peasant rags. The woman was similarly dressed, and still somewhat veiled according to Mohammedan custom. Their four children were enjoying a hearty meal of black bread, cheese and grapes. Two Armenian peasants walked over to us, seeing

* The Armenians called themselves "Hai" and their country "Hayasdan." The words, "Armenia" and "Armenians" are foreign nomenclatures.

that we were strangers, and so gorgeously attired! They offered to sell us two live chickens and a jug of melted butter in exchange for clothes. They wanted heavy winter apparel—coats, pants, shoes. It was September and although it was still burning hot in Armenia, the peasants, having enough to eat, wanted clothing in order to be prepared for the severe winter. We offered to buy the fowl and the butter and offered high prices but the peasants would not sell for money.

"The money is of no use to us," said one. "My pocket is full of rubles but what I can buy with them is another story."

"Look," he continued, pointing to his blouse of black denim, "new material does not wear at all. I have had this only two months and it will not carry me through the winter. And the shoes," he said, "just look at them! I paid sixty rubles for them and they are in pieces already."

The Red Cross automobile, a gray Buick donated by the Armenians of Detroit, finally arrived and interrupted our first tête-a-tête with the peasants.

The present city fathers of Erivan have large dreams for it, and being ever practical patriots, they have already started working on the dream. The architect Tamanian, from the former Royal Academy in Moscow, a middle-aged man of simple and modest manners, has been given entire charge of the plans of the new city, and he cherishes the ambition that when the new Erivan is completed it shall be called "The Beautiful." It will be a city of buff-rose and gray stone buildings. Many public buildings, conceived somewhat in a modern version of old

Armenian architectural style—low arches in the Romanesque manner—are already raised in the buff-rose stone, which is brought from a newly discovered stone quarry. It is thought that the old monasteries of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries were built of this stone. It is lightest in weight of any known stone, and has great endurance, qualities which make it very valuable for building purposes.

The city will be built around the new National Theater, for which ground is already broken. We saw Tamanian out on the grounds where workmen had already started digging. There were two gangs digging two separate ditches. One worker refused to work in the ditch assigned to him and had engaged Tamanian in one of the "debates" so characteristic of the country.

"Those men are simply lazy, comrade architect," he shouted passionately. "They simply refuse to move. I cannot work with them. He won't bring in the water. The other won't dig. I just won't work with them—can't," and he threw up his arms in a gesture of despair. Tamanian looked up and suppressed a sigh.

"They will work, they will work, *enguer* [comrade]," said he wearily. "Just go in there and join, please."

"But they make me nervous, comrade architect," was the reply, and by way of proof he held out his right arm, which under the hot sun, with the rolled-up sleeve, showed large black swollen veins. "See my nerves," he continued, pointing to his veins. "Comrade Tamanian, really these men put my nerves on edge!"

Comrade architect could not suppress a smile. "But I cannot carry on my work like this, comrade," said he to the worker, just as if he were an intelligent father reasoning things out with his rebellious boy. "You see, we have to work according to a plan, and the plan simply can't succeed if each worker wants to do as he pleases. You see, we have to do team work here; not what we like but what we *must,* else our lot will be failure."

Plan, team work, failure—these were words which the worker could understand, although the architect had not used them deliberately as a threat, but as a matter of course. They produced an instant reaction of response on the worker's face. That it is all part of the Big Plan, and must not fail; that success depends upon the worker and the team! These ideas he caught as if flashed on a blackboard for his simple mind to read. He grinned.

"Excuse me, *enguer jardarabed* [comrade architect]," he said. He dwelt on the word "architect" and repeated it fondly, as if he admired the word as well as the man to whom it applied. Then he went over and joined the others in the ditch.

We had witnessed one of the new miracles of the Soviet religion: the worker, the all-mighty, to whom belonged all power and the goods of the earth, had been made intelligent and efficient through appeal to his own sense of pride, to his own sense of ownership and participation in the whole of the plan.

Tamanian took us to the office and showed us the plan of the new city and the theater around which the city will be built. The theater will cost two million rubles. It has a winter theater and a sum-

mer amphitheater. The winter theater will have a capacity of twelve to fourteen hundred seats and the amphitheater will seat from fifteen to eighteen hundred. It is to be built on a lot of nearly twenty acres, and besides the theater there will be a group of buildings—lecture halls, concert hall, exhibition hall, library—which will be a center of popular culture and will probably be called *Joghovrtagan Doon* [the people's house].

The new public buildings already completed in other parts of the city are the Agricultural Bank, the Commissariat of Agriculture, the Eye Hospital, the Medical School of the University of Erivan, the Maternity Hospital, and the Veterinarian Institute. Most of these are built of the buff-rose stone, but a few buildings of white stone are included in the planned city. The theater will be surrounded by a large park extending out to the vineyards. Six main avenues will start diagonally from the park, somewhat after the fashion of the Étoile in Paris, and all will run in parallel direction to Mount Ararat, so that anyone walking through these boulevards can lift his eyes and behold Ararat.

Erivan is at least eighteen centuries old. Buildings are still in existence dating proudly from 303 A.D. The old Erivan was an agricultural trade center at the extreme end of Transcaucasia, and a military post in war time between Turks, Armenians and Persians. Later it served military and other purposes for the Tsars of Russia. In the last ten years it has grown from a town of twenty-five thousand to a crowded city of eighty-five thousand.

In its present shape it has three things of which

the natives boast—the main avenue, *Apovian;* Mount Ararat; and *Etchmiadzin,* the monastery, ancient seat of Armenian Christianity since the year 303 A.D. To the tourist who may need more practical things than a mountain and a monastery, things with which to sustain the body rather than to refresh the spirit, two other advantages, of which the natives are not so keenly aware, are the pure water, unequalled anywhere else in the Union, and the vineyards which extend all around on top of the hills and over the plain, with plentiful grapes, peaches, figs, plums and nuts.

The "Rue Apovian"* is not an ordinary street. It is the public square, the rendezvous, the peripatetic school of the ancient Greeks. Half the street is closed to vehicular traffic. It is a long street, cutting through the heart of the city, with newly planted delicate trees on both sides. During the morning hours water runs throughout the whole length of the street in slim, tiny canals dug at the foot of the trees, a clever and a pretty way to refresh the dusty city and its pedestrians under the burning hot sun of a dry climate.

Here the élite gather at night, going nowhere in particular, but walking through the street in company, or standing in the center or on the corners of the blocks, to carry on lively social visiting. Here you meet the great, the illustrious, the young, the old; the peasant and the worker.

On the first evening of my arrival in the city I was invited to join the promenade. We stopped

* Pages 37 to 42 are reprinted by permission of the *Christian Science Monitor,* in which part of this material first appeared.

every three steps to be introduced. Meet comrade the artist, the poet, the commissar, the engineer. And how interested they are in America! How delighted they are to meet one who comes from America! Tourists for the Soviet Union are part of the Five Year Plan. They are events in each Republic of which to boast to the whole Union. To the average tourist Armenia seems too remote and too unknown, hence the hearty welcome to the lone visitor. To be looked upon for the first time in my life as a real bourgeoisie, a true American (for I am only a "foreigner" in America); to be thought of as a very well dressed woman, and, who knows, maybe a rich one—gave me a sensation of well-being such as I had never experienced in my life before!

Ararat is truly a beautiful mountain. In formation and shape it greatly resembles Fujiyama in Japan. It is visible from base to peak, rising pyramid-like over the vast plains below and round about. At one side, more symmetrical even than Ararat, rises "Little Ararat" or *Pokr Masis,* as the Armenians call it. "Masis" is the ancient Armenian name for Ararat.

The top of Mount Ararat belongs to the Turks but the emblem of the Armenian Republic still bears its snow-covered head. The one thing the Turks were unable to destroy during their last fight with the Armenians was Mount Ararat! During Armenian subjection to Turkey through the past six hundred years, Mount Ararat was never taken. It was that part of Armenia which had fallen to Persia, and was in turn taken from the Persians by Russia in 1828. The Nationalist Turks added military

conquest in 1920 to the massacres of 1914 and in the chaotic days of the Revolution they took from Russia another large slice of the historic land of the Armenians. When the Bolsheviks made peace with the Turks and saved the very last remnant of Armenia, they agreed to accept the newest war terms. So it is that Mount Ararat and the River Arax at its foot, both ancient national symbols for the Armenians, mark the present-day boundary between nationalist Turkey and Soviet Armenia. There is a story told by the Armenians with much relish in regard to this latest dispute over Mount Ararat and the symbol of the Armenian Republic.

When the Armenians adopted the peak of Mount Ararat as the national emblem of their little Republic, Ismet Pasha, the clever prime minister of the Nationalist Turks, who had obtained so much at Lausanne by the simple method of demanding it from the western Powers, thought he would be able to do the same thing with the Russians. He protested to Tchicherin, then the Soviet minister of foreign affairs, that since Mount Ararat was on the Turkish side of the boundary the Armenians had no right to appropriate the top of it as their national emblem. To this Tchicherin replied that, surely, using an object as a symbol had nothing to do with the right of possession. "After all," he said, "the Turks have the crescent and the star for their national emblem, but of course it does not signify that the Turks own the moon and the stars, or have any pretentions to such ownership!"

THE RED FLAG AT ARARAT

Etchmiadzin, the Monastery

303 A.D. is the date when, according to Armenian belief, the "spirit of the only son" descended to the particular spot at the foot of Mount Ararat where now stands the monastery known as Etchmiadzin—"descent." Center of the Armenian Apostolic Church for over seventeen centuries, symbol of Armenian history, the hearth of Armenian culture and literature, which kept the Armenians alive as a people with their ancient Christianity against such tremendous odds, this monastery, which still stands as the national center of the Armenian Church, was the only vestige of Armenian nationhood which neither Turks nor Tartars, nor later the Tsars, could destroy.

On the third day of my arrival in Armenia I was taken to visit Etchmiadzin. The Supreme Patriarch, known as the *Catholicos,* sits in Etchmiadzin. From all over the world, wherever Armenians were scattered, living in exile, in poverty or in opulence, they paid homage to the Supreme Patriarch. There were many great scholars and statesmen among those who for seventeen centuries occupied the chair of the Catholicos and served their people well. In the course of centuries the peculiar political and religious tradition of the Near East, together with the great wealth accumulated through wills and endowments and taxes paid by all the Armenian churches throughout the world, gave the Catholicos an important political position in the eyes of the Tsars and Sultans. Before the Revolution the Armenians the world over mentioned with pride—and

now the communists point out with deep condemnation—the fact that the monastery of Etchmiadzin owned property to the value of six hundred million rubles, wealth second only to that of the Tsars. The income from this kept the monastery, the theological seminary, the great ancient library, the mission schools, and the poor churches in the exiled Armenian colonies. The last Catholicos, "Kevork V," died in 1930 at the age of eighty-seven. He practically imprisoned himself in his cell during the last years of his life, refusing to communicate with the communist leaders because of their anti-religious activities, although there was no special activity directed against his person or the monastery.

I had the opportunity to be received by the acting Catholicos, a man of great scholarship and personal charm. He, too, once one of the princes of the church and living in princely state, is now stripped of his political power and is confining his rule within the monastery, although he has absolute freedom to move about. The old Catholicos was not only the spiritual head but the diplomatic representative of the Armenian people before the Tsars. He was elected for life directly by the people in a congress of laymen and clergymen, and this election was an epoch-making event of pomp and ceremony in the ancient days. The election then had to be formally sanctioned by the Tsar, wherein came the political recognition of his position.

All this is now changed. As most wealthy Armenians lived in Moscow and the great cities, the property left in wills to the monastery was in those cities, and all this, worth millions, has been confis-

cated by the respective republican governments of the Soviet Union. Rows of apartment dwellings and office buildings in Tiflis, in Moscow, in Baku, are now the property of those governments. The Armenian government has confiscated what is left on Armenian soil—the vineyards, the flour mill, and custody of the precious library of ancient manuscripts, attached to the monastery. The temple itself and the cells of the monks are the only property over which the Catholicos now has jurisdiction. New elections must be held to elect the successor of the dead Catholicos. This involves the pilgrimage to Etchmiadzin of hundreds of Armenian delegates from each Armenian parish in the world, Turkey, Greece, Syria, Egypt, France, the United States, India.

The fury of anti-religious Soviet activity has not descended as heavily on the head of the Armenian Church as it did on the Russian Church. In the midst of the two most oppressive monarchial governments of the world, of the Tsars and the Sultans, the Patriarchs of the Armenian Church held on to democratic forms and popular elections for their own offices. Thus the people continued their control of the church. The position of the bishops and priests demanded that they side with their people during subjugation to foreign rulers. They had to guard their flock from the very rulers whose stronghold was the clergy of their own national church. Indeed, many believe that the Armenians survived as a people because of the unity of their church, and the clergy were often the leaders of the rebellions against foreign rulers. They were the comforters

ETCHMIADZIN

"Descent"

of their persecuted flock. Many of them were the first on the suspect list of the Sultans and the Tsars. They went to prison, to exile, to death, and suffered untold tortures at the hands of the oppressors, but seldom betrayed their people. Because of this history, the Armenian clergy as a class showed no active opposition to Soviet rule. The Soviet government has given formal permission to the church for the elections of the new Catholicos but the practical steps have not yet been taken.*

The monastery is now supported mainly by contributions from the Armenians abroad and by the peasants, who bring food to the monks. I attended service in the main temple on Holy Cross Day. The church was full of peasants and children, but no young people could be seen. The government makes a very nice distinction between official religious persecution and the anti-religious activity of the Communist Party. It is true that all "believers," as they call them, are free to go to church and worship. The churches are open, and no priest is shot at dawn or sent to Siberia because he is a priest, but only because, it is alleged, he is often a *koulak* or a counter-revolutionist. The anti-religious campaign, however, going full speed, does not leave much need for old-fashioned methods of persecution. A sign such as I saw at the front of the newly built hotel at Leninagan, the second largest city of the Armenian Republic, should be sufficient to close the doors of many churches. It was an immense red cloth

* Permission was given by the Soviet government to hold the elections on November 10, 1932.

bearing this inscription in huge letters of white:

Religion is the enemy of the Five Year Plan—
Down with the religious holidays!
Religion is the means of keeping the workers enslaved—
Enter the Union of fighting Atheists.
All religions are destructive and they block the progress of socialistic upbuilding.

New Seals on Ancient Parchments

The visit to the library of Etchmiadzin was the most thrilling and most rewarding one of my trip. Contrary to reports during the early days of the Revolution, nothing of historic value was deliberately destroyed and most things have been remarkably preserved. Eighteen trunks of precious church relics, parchments and manuscripts from the monastery and the library, were shipped to Moscow during the campaign of 1920, when the Turks threatened to advance and occupy Erivan and Etchmiadzin. These trunks were under the special care and protection of Karakhan, the present Assistant Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, himself an Armenian by birth, who later caused all of the trunks to be returned intact to Armenia. This is mentioned with thanks and deep appreciation both by communist and old régime Armenians.

"The oldest manuscript in the original Armenian dates only from 887 A.D.," deplored the director of the library. It is a New Testament. There are

precious translations from the Greek, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries. There is a volume of one of the works of Eusebius of Caesarea. The original Greek is supposed to be lost and the most ancient, a first translation directly from the Greek, is preserved only in the Armenian. The director believes that he will yet find some Armenian manuscripts in the original form from the fifth century.

Most of the older manuscripts were destroyed by the vandalism of the many invading armies on Armenian territory. "If the Soviet rule had been in power then, we would have had more ancient manuscripts," said the director devoutly. "The invading armies were always and most particularly bent on destroying the cultural heritage of the groups they conquered."

It is surprising that in spite of such history the library boasts of 4,600 volumes of manuscripts on parchment. There is a New Testament known as the "Ivory Testament" because it has been preserved by an ivory cover with beautifully carved angels on it. The cover is estimated to be of the fifth century, but the manuscript is supposed to be of later date. Then there is "No. 102," which is the only non-religious Armenian manuscript of that date. It is a mathematics and geography book, dating from the tenth century. It is internationally known as "No. 102," in the libraries of the world.

"That we have been able to rescue and preserve these," said the director, holding in his hands the Ivory Testament very much as a nurse would hold a delicate baby, "is nothing short of a miracle. It

is only due to the old Armenian tradition that script is holy, that written paper is sanctified and should never be stepped upon or soiled, that it must be destroyed by fire and water only.* This tradition survived in peasant homes even to our own days, so that in the last five years fourteen hundred new volumes have been located and collected from homes of peasants who probably were descendents of learned men. Even though they themselves have become illiterate through adverse circumstances of their own days, these peasants preserved the 'holy script' from generation to generation. The government has now a paid archeological scouting party which travels from village to village and collects valuable manuscripts." At present the volumes of pre- and post-revolutionary collections total seven thousand, and they have in addition seventy thousand "archives" on parchment. These are government papers, historical documents, communications and military papers.

As we entered this ancient seat of light and knowledge we saw the great Red flag in front of the building and a new emblem carved in the old, old marble—the hammer and the sickle in the center; around them in the initials H. S. KH. H., *Hayasdani Sotzialistagan Khorhrtayin Hanrabedutun.* The Soviet government is putting new black leather covers on all these volumes, to protect them from wear and tear. A gold seal in the center of the cover of the fifth century Bible, translated from the Greek,

* Respect for the written word was so great in Armenia in those days that any one who wrote a book was automatically raised to the peerage.

A MONK READING THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Garden of the Old Monastery at Etchmiadzin

tells the same story—"H. S. KH. H.—Commissariat of Enlightenment."* Strange designs on the ghosts of old Saints! From a fifth century gospel to the seal of the Commissariat of Education of the Armenian Socialist Soviet Republic seems a long way—an ancient people and an ancient heritage stirred by this newest of social and political experiments!

* Enlightenment is the Armenian term for education.

A MINIATURE SOVIET REPUBLIC

THE students in the University of Erivan always referred to their little Republic in terms of the whole Union: "We are part of one-sixth of the world," they used to say. Thus the Soviet Union has given status and "the power of the whole" to this smallest but one of the most ancient of all the historically developed peoples of the earth. This conception of united strength is one of the most potent forces with the youth of the whole Soviet Union.

The present boundaries of Armenia comprise twenty-nine thousand square kilometers, slightly larger than Belgium (twenty-six thousand square miles) and a little smaller than Switzerland (thirty-three thousand square miles). The country is mountainous and rugged, and if developed could equal Switzerland in scenic beauty. Its chief handicap, however, is scarcity of water. In contrast to Switzerland's hundreds of lakes and rainy days it has but one large lake, only a few poor rivers, and a few rainy days in summer. Every drop of water is being utilized to the utmost for hydro-electric development. Under its present peaceful conditions and with the high birth rate which still prevails in Armenia today, the country is full of hope and promise.

Reconstruction Is My Name

Reconstruction is even more of a byword in Armenia than in other parts of the Union. Rebuilding is going on at a furious pace. If I were asked to find a new name for symbolizing the Armenia of today I should call her "Reconstruction." The Union is giving its mighty strength to building this miniature Soviet Republic according to the first Marxian principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." The president of the Council of People's Commissars, Sahag der Kaprielian, in his annual report to the central executive committee of the Armenian Republic, in February, 1931, gave a remarkably impressive picture of this reconstruction program. The report appeared in full in *Soviet Armenia,* the official organ of the Communist Party, published in Erivan. He spoke of the work of reconstruction and of the results of their labors and of future plans. He entitled one section of his report, "The brilliant results of Lenin's regional nationality policy," meaning the development and full self-government of culturally and historically developed nations, of which Armenia is one. He says:

"Under the five-year plan, the sum total of reconstructive projects in the Republic of Armenia is estimated to be 268 million rubles. Of this, 254 million have already been spent in the last three years of the five-year period! From 1927-28 our reconstruction plan was fulfilled one hundred per cent. In 1928-29 our reconstruction plan was fulfilled by 157 per cent. In 1929-30 by 148 per cent; but in 1930-31 fulfillment *will be* 207 *per cent.* . . . The increase of the output of the *whole Union* for 1931 is expected to be 45 per cent; for

the Transcaucasian Federation it will be 66 per cent; for the Armenian Republic 107 *per cent.* You will naturally ask why growth is only 45 per cent for the Union, 66 per cent for the Transcaucasian Federation, and 107 per cent for Armenia. That, comrades, is the very fundamental principle of our nationality development policy. As you well know, Tsaristic Russia had condemned the far regions of nationality dominions to the utmost neglect and backwardness. According to the Communist Party's nationality policy as formulated by Lenin, the backward regions must be pushed ahead with greater speed. This policy is being fully practised and realized as applied to Armenia, and we already see its eloquent results here in our Republic. The highest percentage of a single item in the Five Year Plan will be spent on agricultural development, that is 81 million. To the industrial development will go 87 million, of which 25 million will be for electrical development, 32 million will go to irrigation, and about 12 million for schools and education. 45 million will be spent to eliminate illiteracy."*

A new campaign of forestation is on its way. The Young Communists, the Pioneers, and all youth and children's organizations have been mobilized in a great tree-planting campaign. In 1930, 320,000 trees were planted and the campaign will continue until the number is increased to 500,000. Every year after this the tree-planting campaign will be launched with ceremonies, and the significance of a great national celebration will be given to it. Thus the naked Armenian mountains will be clothed with trees, and it is hoped that the forests will have an effect in changing the climate by creating moisture through the green of the trees.

Education and elimination of illiteracy is another passionate enterprise of the Republic. The Presi-

* *Soviet Armenia,* daily organ of the Communist Party of Armenia, February 17, 1931.

dent's report refers to this in the following words:

"This year we are enrolling in our schools ninety-five per cent of the children from the ages of nine to eleven. This is a great conquest for our Republic. In 1931 we are spending for compulsory elementary education nine and a half million rubles. It was anticipated that during the Five Year Plan we would take care of 56,000 children in our schools. Already in the third year of the plan we have enrolled 116,000 children. Besides these conquests, comrades, we have had considerable success in eliminating illiteracy. In the beginning of the *Piatlatka*—the Five Year Plan—we had 245,000 illiterate and half-illiterate people. According to our plan we were to liquidate the illiteracy of 35,000 adults in two years, but during this time we have eliminated the illiteracy of 95,000 persons. This, my dear comrades, cannot be accomplished by our own republican forces only. It has been possible because the whole Union is back of us, and also because the teachers, the young people, the women, have all joined forces and have done this work mainly free of charge, as part of their social obligation to the community. As to the children of pre-school age, we have even greater and more striking success here. According to our plan we anticipated caring for 9,000 children of pre-school age, but in the three years we already have 38,000 children in the network of pre-school work. This means that the mother of young children is going to be free from the responsibility of child care, and will be ready to join in the work of community upbuilding."*

Irrigation, hydro-electricity and education are the new gods before whom the young sons and daughters of the ancient Armenians bow. Occasionally even the progressive peasant has seen the effect of irrigation on his labor and has substituted the new *hydroshen* — hydro-electric station — for his old miracle worship. The cabman, the shoeshiner, will ask you in the course of your business transaction, "Have

* Translated from *Soviet Armenia,* February 17, 1931.

you been to the hydroshen yet?" Already a good deal of arid soil has been irrigated and placed on the list of arable lands.

The large project under construction was the irrigation of the smaller of the two deserts within the boundaries of the present Armenian Republic. This small desert, known as *Pokr Sardarapad,* was once a project proposed to the League of Nations by the late Dr. Nansen, for the purpose of making the desert habitable to 15,000 Armenian refugees who were to be transported from Greece.

The project went as far as sending a commission to Armenia, headed by Dr. Nansen, but nothing happened. The president of the Council of Commissars told me, with very obvious pride, that the Soviet Union will do its work without outside aid, and that they have already started realizing that which the League regarded as an impracticable dream of the visionary Dr. Nansen. The waters of the River Arax were to be utilized for this irrigation.

Industry and Natural Resources

Armenia is a grape and peach country. The designs on the friezes and frescoes and stone carvings found in the ruins of old palaces and monasteries usually have motifs of grape clusters, peaches and pomegranates.

The land is drier now than in the days of Noah! The naked mountains look scorched under the burning sun. Even in the fertile valleys the forests that start from the banks of rivers and creeks seldom reach the full height of the mountains. The tops of

A TYPICAL VILLAGE SCENE

"The Forests Seldom Reach the Top of the Mountains"

the mountains make a tragic picture, blazing like "the moon of a bald-headed man."

The only industry of the Armenian Republic outside of farming and cattle and sheep raising has been the grape industry, which yields good cognac and wines. The cognac is considered next to French cognac in excellence. The output of this industry supplies the whole Union and is exported to Persia, Finland and the Scandinavian countries.

Of mineral resources copper is the most important. Copper mines were opened about twenty-five years ago and exploited to a certain degree, but until recently no importance was attached to them. Before the Revolution the wealthy Armenians of the Russian Empire never concerned themselves with the exploitation of the natural wealth of the Armenian soil. They were trading people and captains of industry in the big cities and in the Caucasus. They were the oil kings in Baku and sugar kings in Tiflis and textile manufacturers and merchants in Moscow and Leningrad.

The exploitation of indigenous natural resources such as copper and grapes, was left entirely to the foreigners. The extensive cognac business in Erivan was owned and operated by a Russian named Shousteff. The monopoly of the copper mines was given to a French company. These industries are now nationalized and the income is poured into the big purse of the Soviet Union, out of which Armenia, in turn, receives more than she puts in at the present time.

The copper mines of Allahverdi, the only ones in operation at present, have a history of fifty years.

In the early days an ancient Greek colony, now wholly Armenianized, lived in the neighborhood of Allahverdi, and some of the enterprising men of that day dug into the mines with their primitive tools.

In 1905 the Tsar's government granted the monopoly to a French company which remained there until 1920, when the Bolshevik government of Armenia took over the mines. The mines remained idle from 1920-1925, during the "destructive period" of the Revolution. When the upward trend began, which the communists call the "constructive phase" of the Revolution, operations were resumed. For the present the mining is not a profit-making concern. It covers only expenses. The budget of the Five Year Plan has an appropriation of forty-five million rubles for the development of the Allahverdi mines. That budget will keep a total of twelve hundred miners and workers in the mines and the smelting plant.

Four American engineers are assigned to the Allahverdi mines—a geologist, a consulting engineer at the smelting plant, and two mining engineers. Leon Hazarian, an Armenian native of Leninagan, is the chief engineer and the technical director of the plant. The year before his appointment he had been in the United States for eight months studying the Arizona mines.

We saw the American geologist sitting with rolled shirt-sleeves in his office on top of a hill. He seemed the most grateful of men for our visit and for conversation in English without an interpreter. He was a man of middle age, of the quiet, professional type.

I asked if life was bearable in the wilds of Armenian mountains. He replied that the engineers were being given good care and the best of everything available in the country, and added, "Life is more bearable and more interesting here than in any mining town in America or elsewhere in the world."

I asked what had made him come so far.

"Mining engineers are always bums and adventurers. We are always looking out for new territory to conquer; this is as good a place as any to which I have been so far," he said.

New copper "open mines," reported to be immensely rich, had been recently discovered in the Zankezour* region, but operation had not yet begun. These mines are reported to have also gold and zinc combined with the copper. When operations begin in the Zankezour region the Armenian Republic will be the first in importance as a copper country in the Soviet Union. The Urals and Kazakistan are the only other localities where the Soviet Union can dig its own copper. Copper is of very great importance to the Union because it is necessary for "electrification" and for "defense" (the manufacture of arms), the two giant tools with which communism hopes to conquer the enemy within and without.

Two new industries, textiles and tobacco, are being developed under the present reconstruction plan by planting the varieties of cotton and tobacco which will grow best in the Armenian soil. Young women, university graduates, are traveling on horseback in the villages as *agronoms* [agriculturists], supervis-

* One of the most picturesque and mountainous regions.

ing cotton plantations and teaching the collectives how to raise good cotton. These young pioneers sleep in the village schoolhouse or the Central Soviet club houses as they travel.

Cattle and sheep raising is also receiving special attention. Already an extensive dairy industry is being developed. The village of Stepanavan, one of the most ancient of Armenian villages, is the center of the dairy industry. Tons of "Swiss cheese" are manufactured and exported to France, Germany and England. Not a pound of it can be seen on the market for native consumption. It goes as Armenia's share of sacrifice to the great Moloch—the Piatlatka. There is plenty of delicious home-made cheese, however, in the village bazaars, where the peasant is allowed to bring his own home-manufactured product and sell it for his own profit.

The only respectable body of water within the confines of the Armenian Republic is Lake Sevan, a great bowl of water on top of a hill, said to be of unique topographic position on account of its unusually high altitude. The word *Sevan* has held a magic throughout the centuries for every Armenian heart, and the lake has been one of the imperishable landmarks of ancient Armenian history. In the lake, on its lone little island, stands "Sevana Vank," the famous monastery of the sixth century, with its dark, hooded spires, a precious survival of one of Armenia's most characteristic types of monastic architecture. The monastery has now been appropriately turned into an artists' rest and summer home.

Sevan's water is being considered for use in a

very ambitious irrigation project. In the meantime it adds so much more grist to the Soviet machine by supplying tons of fish for exportation to foreign countries. A fish known as "the prince," found in Lake Sevan, is famous. It is a beautiful long silvery fish speckled with black, and is known to be a rare species of the salmon. It has a light peach-colored flesh and a very delicate flavor. The name comes from a story connected with a prince and the monks of the monastery. A prince of the reigning dynasty in the sixth century was caught in a storm on the lake and forced on the rocks of the island monastery. Exhausted and hungry, he saw at the moment of his landing that the monks were pulling in a net full of fish. He asked if he might buy some and the monks replied, "Yes, if you can pay the weight in gold of one fish, for this is the prince of fish."

A fishery and a giant refrigerating plant have now been installed on the shore of this legendary lake. Here the fish are frozen and made exportable and are sent out to France, Germany and England, where it is known as "ferrell."

"To think that the food of our own solitary lake must go out to fill the fat bellies of the capitalists of France and England, who are surrounded by seas and the ocean and can eat hundreds of kinds of fish!" exclaimed the guide as he showed us the huge reservoirs of iced fish. "But now it must be so. We shall let them eat all they can digest, but later we shall know how to enjoy it ourselves!"

Nationalism and Nationhood

What is the conception of nationality in a form of government which sings the Third International

and considers all workers of all nations brothers? How do the various Republics, organized on the basis of the nationality concept, do their work? How freely can the leaders of the small Republics develop their own interests consistently with the devotion which true communists must feel for the whole Union? The so-called nationalism of capitalistic countries is an unfailing subject of bitter denunciation and a daily target for attack by communists. How is this monster controlled under communism? How much pride in your small Republic and in the progress of your own national group is legitimate and how much is not? The cult of "mine" is taboo, and a stumbling-block to all orthodox Bolshevists. The interest in the welfare of the whole Union is the only rightful interest toward which all must work. This demand for restraint on special fondness for that which is one's own is one of the hackling and somewhat inconsistent teachings of communistic doctrine.

While smooth working-relationships among the various national groups within the Union have been successfully established, the nationality problem in each Republic, as distinguished from nationalism (and as distinguished from the minorities problem within each Republic), has not ceased to be a thorn in the Bolshevik flesh. Almost parallel in importance to orthodox economic determinism runs the nationality question. Just as in the matter of economic policy, so in the matter of nationality policy there are the deviating paths to "right" and "left" from the invisible orthodox party "line" in the exact center. The scales must be perfectly balanced be-

tween devotion to nationality and allegiance to the Union and the international faith of communism. This double invisible "line" of party economic policy, together with nationality policy, is the supreme test of the loyalty and orthodoxy of every true communist. Anything either extreme "left" or "right" is condemned because it tends to scandalize the common people and is above their level of mental and cultural development, hence not "realistic" according to orthodox communism.

The severest test on the nationality question probably falls on the leaders of the autonomous Republics. They who were once the subject peoples and fought and bled for national independence have a hard time keeping in leash their thirst for self-expression in matters purely national. They are constantly watched and are always in danger of going astray into the paths of "nationalism."

As in all matters of serious concern, the Bolshevist is so intent on finely defined issues that the young enthusiasts are led into ludicrous exaggeration. They keep a constantly accusing finger pointed at the older revolutionary leaders, with the cry, "He is carrying the nationalistic line." Sometimes the issues flare up from the smallest incidents. Perhaps the printing of pre-revolutionary poems and songs dedicated to the cause of national liberty has been encouraged, or they have been sung or recited in public gatherings; perhaps a new building is raised in old national architectural style. Such things cause the fall and rise of the commissars of the particular departments involved.

I met with a perfect illustration of this situation.

A silent young man joined our train from Tiflis to Erivan. He was one of those typical young communists just rising on the horizon, who, with little background, have reached positions of commanding responsibility through sheer Bolshevistic enthusiasm. His generation is the first crop of the Revolution, and their whole world of reality has been Soviet experience. They know nothing of the outside world except what they have been allowed to learn through communistic teaching, and they take themselves with the most terrible seriousness.

This youth was the only one out of five, all young communists, who had a certain antagonism toward the capitalistic *meschanka* [bourgeois woman] from America, and plainly showed it. Within half an hour after crossing the border from Georgia to Armenia, at midnight, the whole group took advantage of a fifteen-minute stop at the station to have tea. They had all teased me previously for what they called my nationalistic sentimentality, so outspoken was my delight at walking on the historic soil of Armenia. When tea came and we all sat around the table I said, somewhat in playful spite, to show off my nationalistic bent, "So this is Armenian tea I am drinking now!" Before any of my friends thought of making a reply, this young man, with whom I had hardly exchanged a word, called out without the shadow of a smile on his pale face: "No, madam, that is not Armenian tea you are drinking. It is All-Soviet Union tea!"

"Nevertheless," I said, laughing, "mine is Armenian tea!"

"I have no desire to converse with you," he said,

and turned away! Silence prevailed, and I turned the conversation.

This was the only incident of its kind in which I became personally involved. It completely baffled and disturbed me that night, but I learned afterward that it was one of the current exigencies of daily life, and that what happened there was typical of the same situation in other Republics.

Like everything else in the Soviet Union, however, there is a formula for the solution of this problem too. Stalin, as the chief disciple and interpreter of Lenin, has done more to clarify the confusion in regard to the place of nationality and of nationhood in a communistic society than did Lenin himself, who had not time to formulate a workable doctrine. Stalin is the chief authority and spokesman on this nationality question. His book, published in 1927, entitled *The Question of Nationality,* is a guide. I read the Armenian translation from the original Russian. He defines nationality in a few paragraphs in rather striking terms.

"What is Nationality? Nationality is primarily a large community of people. It is a distinct group evolved and organized on historical rather than racial or ethnic grounds. Thus nationality is a group with continuity and historic permanence, and not an accidental or temporary conglomeration of people.

"Community of language, territory and economic unity are distinguishing attributes of nationality. These alone, however, do not constitute nationality. Above all these it is very essential to consider the peculiar characteristics of group psychology in which the image of a nationality is cast, and which distinguishes one national group from another. Thus nations differ from each other not only on grounds of social structure,

but also on the basis of those psychological factors which find expression in a distinctive national culture. The community of culture resulting from this process is one of the basic characteristics of nationality."

From this definition of nationality Stalin developed his brief formula which he enunciated in the Sixteenth All-Union Communist Party Congress held in Moscow in June, 1930. He defined the orthodox nationality policy in seven words—"National in form and proletarian in content." On this brief formula is based the "line" which must be carried by each Republic as a matter of practical party politics. The formula has become a source of abiding comfort and support to the harassed leaders of the present small Republics, who are laboring hard to walk unerringly on the invisible line and to keep themselves from falling "right" or "left." Thus in "form" each nationality becomes a Republic and a co-equal in the Union, irrespective of size and power. The connection with internationalism is made through the "proletarian content."

It is only we in the outside world who speak of "Russia" as if it were the whole Union. Over there they never refer to Russia in terms of the whole Union. Russia is mentioned only as one of the federated Republics within the Union. Moscow is never spoken of as the capital of Russia. It is the capital of the U. S. S. R. The All-Union Soviet Council of the People's Commissars, who sit in the Kremlin, are certainly not all of them Russians ruling over puppet governments. They represent the whole Union in reality. As is well known, Stalin, the chief himself, is a Georgian by birth. Karaghan,

the Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs, in charge of the East, is an Armenian, and so is Mikoyan the Commissar of Trade, who has had so much to do with the Five Year Plan. There are Tartar Turks and of course Jews in responsible positions. The Transcaucasian Republics bear allegiance to three capitals—to their own, to the capital of the Transcaucasian Federation, Tiflis, and to the capital of the U. S. S. R., Moscow.

According to Stalin's definition of nationality, therefore, Armenia is a full-fledged nation, with territory, language, racial homogeneity, historic continuity, and a psychological image of a distinctive individuality of its own. Armenia, in fact, is the most homogeneous of the Transcaucasian Republics, with ninety per cent of its population made up of Armenians and ten per cent of Turks, Kurds and other races.

Schools, courts, industry and government in the Armenian Republic are all manned by Armenians, and business is carried on in the Armenian language. The Army, the Post, the Currency, are All-Union enterprises. The Republics have their own divisions of the Red army, but each Republic's boundary is guarded by All-Union soldiers, that is, the soldiers on the Armenian-Turkish frontier are Russians and perhaps Armenian soldiers guard the Polish-Russian, or Polish-Ukrainian frontier.

This form of organization of the Red army, by a division for each Republic, seems to give entire satisfaction so far as military self-expression is concerned. One of the most stirring sights I witnessed when I was in Armenia was the early-morning march

through the streets in Erivan of the recruits born in 1908, who were being called then for the two-year service. My childhood memories took me back to Turkey, when first in 1912 and then in the great war, Armenian youths were called to serve in the Turkish army. How Armenian mothers tore their hair, how family jewels were sold to pay the ransom tax for military exemption, and how scores of young men who could not buy exemption languished in attics and cellars to escape service in the "enemy army"! Here I saw a different sight. The conscripts, bright-eyed and strong, marched proudly with songs and red flags, and mothers and sisters marched along happily with them to the railroad station.

Later in the month, when traveling in the villages, we stopped with one of the village physicians who was on the board of physical examiners for the recruits. He invited us to the barracks where the examinations were being held. We lunched with the six doctors, two very charming young women and four men. They told us what a hard time they had telling the men who did not pass the examinations. They were so eager to go that they simply broke down and wept in despair.

The eagerness to serve is so great that as part of the campaign against illiteracy Soviet officials ruled that those who were not proficient in reading and writing could not be drafted. Many were put on a three-month probation, and how those boys worked in order not to be left out! It is no wonder, because the army and the children are the apples of the Soviet eye, and are the best fed and best clothed

in the whole Union. Service in the army gives a young man two years of good times, such as he could have in no other way, with conditions as they are. Naturally no young man wants to miss the lark. In addition, they all come back fitted to some specific vocation after two years of good training. This training system is also one of the communistic ways of leavening the life of the village. Great stress is laid upon sending the trained soldiers as civilians back to their own villages. They are usually helped to get leading positions on the village Soviet, and who would be more loyal a bodyguard of village Sovietism than these returned conscripts of the Red army?

In this same fascinating new way each of the miniature Soviet Republics has also the broadest system of cultural freedom for the minorities within it. The Turks and Kurds, who make up ten per cent of the population of the Armenian Republic, are learning Turkish and Kurdish in special schools headed by Turkish and Kurdish teachers. The Armenian children in Tiflis can go to Armenian schools, and the Russians go to Russian schools in Azarbaidjan. It usually means that these children grow up with three languages, their own, that of the Republic in which they live, and Russian for the whole Union, and are as a rule equally proficient in all three. Thus Stalin's formula, ever so fondly cited in all Transcaucasia, is the knife that has cut the Gordian knot. There is hope that in the perilous territory of internationality relationships within the Union, mountains of long and firmly established national antagonisms will melt away before this simple formula. Racial

hostilities between adjacent territories have already been effectively stopped. Race-baiting has ceased to be a sport. Nationality is recognized as a wholly natural growth, just as is one's hair or the color of one's eyes. It has ceased to trouble anybody, from the standpoint of deviation from the group in power or in the majority. A common bond of a larger vital interest—that of economic dependence—has relegated to an unimportant place any diversity of language and custom, of color of eyes, skin and texture of hair. Such differences have ceased to be the boogy-man who eats up the children of the other party. They are now merely recognized and passed by.

For the present, this state of affairs has given to the Republics of the Caucasus a gaiety, a vacation air, an atmosphere of relief which is entirely lacking in the north, especially in Leningrad and Moscow. One partial explanation is that food is decidedly more plentiful and more accessible in the south. I believe, however, that the real reason lies in the fact that while the cities of the north and its population are recovering from heavy losses—the fall of their standard of living, the loss of their care-free bourgeois and aristocratic security, the passing of their very individualistic cultural freedom — these southern Republics are coming upward from a lower to a higher standard of living. In other words, while the great Russian cities had everything to lose the Caucasus had "nothing to lose but its chains." The somewhat accumulated goods of the rulers are now actually distributed to all, and that is why every one is covered, thinly, it may be, but nevertheless cov-

ered. It is this complete autonomy in cultural self-determination which, coupled with new economic opportunities, has given old Transcaucasia a double gain through the Revolution. The happiness and contentment it has brought can be seen reflected in the face of the man on the street.

ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE PEOPLE

LOUS-JOGH-COM was the place where I was to go for my first interview with the Commissar of Education. The Armenian word for public education is not used in the pedagogical sense but in the sense of general public enlightenment. According to the Bolshevik custom of abbreviating the new big and long names, Lous-Jogh-Com is made up of the first syllables of the three words, *Lousavoroutyan Joghovertayin Commissariat*—the Commissariat of Public Enlightenment.

The commissar's office is located in an old, rather shabby building. Two women secretaries work in his outside office and to all comers wanting an interview they show the sign on the door which reads, "Comrade Y. receives (parents, teachers, pupils, workers, peasants) for personal interviews on the 4th, 9th, 14th, 24th, 29th day of each month—hours from 2-3 p.m."

The appointment given to me was a special one on the commissar's "rest day," in order to have it free from interruption. Nevertheless the outer room was full of persons waiting and hoping for an interview.

The commissar's secretary entered into an argument with a young man who insisted that he had come from his village on foot and knew nothing about the commissar's special days and hours.

"He is there, is he not?" he said, pointing to the

door of the commissar's office, "and why should I not see him whenever I want? He is the people's commissar, is he not?"

The secretary became sweet and persuasive. "But this is his rest day; he was not even supposed to be in his office today except that he had to come down for one hour's special business."

"Well, mine is special business too," said the bold young man, who felt that this was a test of his belief that the commissar was the PEOPLE'S commissar and hence had no right to have special hours for receiving the people. He brushed the secretary aside and walked into the commissar's office. He was in for three minutes. He emerged smiling and triumphant, letting a defiant glance fall on the secretary as he walked out of the room.

I was next to be called in. Every one was startled and some were indignant. "Why she? I have been waiting here since seven in the morning," said one.

"But she is a foreigner, don't you see," pleaded the secretary. "She is a journalist. You have come from the village, but she came all the way from America."

At this every one was silenced and gazed at me in amazement and good will.

The Commissar of Enlightenment, Ardo Yeghiazarian (since resigned), was thirty years of age, the youngest of the Council of the People's Commissars and one of the most popular. People spoke of him by his first name. "Ardo is a wise boy," they would say. He did not, like many others, yield to the temptation of asking questions about America in a little preliminary social visit but at once began the

official interview. It was to be one hour and I had written down my questions. I wanted to know about the general outline of the school system; something about the education of the children of the minority groups—Turks, Kurds, Russians; about the university system and the professional schools; something of the philosophy, methods and aim of education under the Soviet system.

The Soviet educational system is uniform for the whole Union, as far as method and aim are concerned. I felt, therefore, that whatever I could learn about the Armenian system would be significant because, on a small scale, it would represent the system of the whole Union. To this field, too, America has brought its contribution of advanced technique. John Dewey in 1924 laid the foundation of the vast educational network of the Soviet Union. The most interesting thing about it is the sincerity, the wholehearted earnestness with which the plan has been put at work. Great flexibility is allowed for the full development of the cultural patterns of the diverse civilizations within the Union and within each Republic.

The Concerns of Soviet Education

"The Commissariat of Enlightenment is concerned not with the school system alone but with the whole cultural life of the people," said the commissar by way of introduction, as we began the official interview. "The radio, the cinema, the press, the theater as avenues of widespread public education are all a part of and under the control and supervision of the Commissariat of Enlightenment.

"The educational system of the schools ideally should begin from the day the child is born and last until his adjustment to his occupational interest, and then of course should be continued culturally throughout his whole life.

"Our plan for the school system, which cannot be wholly realized at present, begins therefore with the child in the nursery school, often beginning with two-months-old babies when the mother returns to work from her four months of rest allowed at child birth. That means nursery age from birth to four years. Then the kindergarten receives the child from four to seven years of age. From seven to eight is a one-year nondescript educational program known as "zero year." General education with a definite trend of interest which will later lead to the vocational begins at eight, and for the present is completed at fifteen. The ideal is to raise this age to seventeen but that cannot be accomplished just yet."

The general basic education, therefore, is built on a period of seven years, from eight to fifteen, and the system is known as "general polytechnical education." There are three types of general polytechnicals. In the cities there are the "factory industrial technicals," in the villages there are "collective agricultural technicals," and again in the cities generally the "communar-technicals." The last are broader and more general in scope, leading to preparation for public service and professional education.

"These polytechnicals, however, are not definite vocational schools," said the commissar with empha-

sis. "They aim to give the pupils general knowledge based on specific vocational interests; in other words, a rather broad knowledge and understanding of the whole range of the industrial and agricultural productivity of the country and of the world. This gives the pupil the basis for future guidance and choice of definite vocational education and training. Therefore, the schools of this category are called polytechnical rather than vocational."

Only four of the seven years of polytechnical school are compulsory, that is, for the ages eight to twelve.

"The age limit for compulsory education ideally should be raised to fifteen," continued the commissar. "In the cities the entire seven-year period is practically compulsory for all except the children of the disinherited classes. If any child of the 'privileged classes' (workers, peasants, intelligentzia), shows aptitude and wishes to continue, he can go as far as the university, but beyond twelve years all education, although free, is elective."

Vocational education begins with the professional-technical schools, which correspond to junior colleges in the United States, or to the old gymnasia in Russia. They have a three-year curriculum covering ages fifteen to eighteen. These schools prepare a type of semi-professional specialist—teachers, artisans, skilled workers, mechanics, etc. They are specialized institutes. At present there are twenty-five such professional-technicals in the Armenian Republic. Ten of them are "Pedagogical Institutes," which prepare teachers, at present the greatest need of the expanding school system. Then

there are three "Reconstruction Technicals," which prepare chemists, mechanics, apprentice-architects, etc. They are needed in reconstruction projects as assistants to highly paid foreign engineers and specialists. There are also four "Industrial Institutes," which prepare skilled artisans for textile and other basic industries; one institute known as "Young Medic-Technical" which prepares male nurses and pre-medical students; one Dramatic and one Dancing Technical; two Music and three "Applied and Household Arts" Technicals. Any of these professional-technicals may lead to the university if the student wishes to go on and is qualified for a higher professional education and career. No one, however, can enter the university before twenty-one.

After these professional-technical schools, with certain basic training, are completed at eighteen there must be three years of preparation in practical life in a chosen vocation before entrance to the university. "This means," explained the commissar, "that during this period the student finds himself definitely in his chosen profession. His qualifications or fitness for the higher professions are more definitely revealed during these three years of work on the field. The student has a chance to discover his permanent aptitude. It serves as entrance qualification (instead of examination) by the elimination process. During the apprenticeship many remain permanently in the semi-professional skilled line; others can change subjects if they find themselves unfitted for the particular vocations in which they have tested themselves for three years. The specially qualified students stand out and the university

authorities then have a basis of admission that gives some assurance for successful university education and a professional career."

High Learning for the Masses

The university has just been reorganized to meet the demands of the new life. Formerly it was organized on a classical basis with a central faculty and a director of the university. At present the university is made up of special institutes. Of these the University of Erivan has five. They are the Institutes of Education, of Agriculture, of Reconstruction, of Engineering and Architecture combined, and of Medicine. A fifth is just being organized as the Institute of Cooperatives, which will be something like a school of business administration, to prepare managers for cooperative store management and for finance, commerce and banking.

There is no School of Law and no School of Social Sciences. These subjects fall under the "Faculty of Social Sciences" within each institute. Marxian socialism must be the starting point of all the social sciences, and political economy is taught in all the schools. Literature, philosophy and history, in terms of economic determinism and Marxian "dialectic materialism," are also taught in all the schools, beginning with the general polytechnicals.

Each institute has a director known as the prorector. The Commissar of Education is the rector of the university. With the exception of the schools of education, the other institutes also come under the supervision of their respective commissariats, that is, the agricultural school under the Commissa-

riat of Agriculture, and the medical school under the Commissariat of Public Health. The School of Education, however, is directly under the Commissariat of Enlightment.

There are, in addition to these institutes, two Transcaucasian Federal Institutes, the Veterinary Technical and the Zoo Technical, which come under the supervision of the Commissar of Enlightenment of the Transcaucasian Federation. These are the only two Transcaucasian federal educational enterprises and both are located in Armenia. The youths from the polytechnicals of the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Azarbaidjan come to Armenia for veterinary and the zoo-technical training.

There are no formal entrance requirements for the university except the three-year apprenticeship in practical work. The examination system has been entirely abrogated and instead the "active system" has been introduced. The instructor will be in personal charge of the small groups. It will enable him to know his students intimately during the year, he will supervise the assignments and will judge at the end of the year whether the student is unfit to continue or has "passed."

"In addition to academic requirements," I asked, "what are the class requirements for admission to the university? Is it true that the children of the disinherited classes, the former bourgeoisie and aristocracy, are excluded?"

"Yes," he smiled, "theoretically they are. As you know, this year we have declared universal compulsory education for all classes, up to twelve years of age. The children of the socially disinherited classes

may finish the polytechnicals up to the seventh year, but it is difficult for them to enter the higher professional technicals and the university. They can get private instruction and pass examinations to enter the university and the polytechnical if there is room.

"For the higher learning we encourage the children of the following classes in terms of priority. First category, the children of the proletariat, the children of the intelligentzia (writers, artists, teachers), the children of the *kol-khos* (the collective peasants). Second category, the children of public officials, artisans, petty traders, peasants, servants, etc. If there is room the children of the other classes may enter."

"What public officials?" I asked. "You mean the children of the commissars?"

"Yes, the children of the commissars."

I laughed aloud at this complete reversal of the order of privilege for the children of officialdom the world over.

"Why do you laugh?" asked the commissar seriously. "We are all in the servant class, we are not productive citizens like the proletariat but their servants."

"As to the children of the disinherited classes, why do you want to penalize innocent children for the sins of their fathers?" I queried. "After all, you all came from the old classes; some of you are children of priests and nobles even. Why do you keep the children in the enemy camp and perpetuate class antagonism, instead of winning them over to you?"

"Life is a stern reality," began this faithful disciple of Carl Marx. "We do not exclude them because of revenge, but because just now we cannot afford higher education for all. Each university student receives a pension from the state to enable him to study. We do not have enough to go around. Therefore we must choose those who were disinherited in the old régime. The others can learn from their parents, who had the privilege of education and can teach their children."

"Does it ever happen that the child of a commissar cannot enter the university?" I asked.

He smiled broadly and said, "No, it rarely happens, but certainly the child of a commissar cannot enter if he is an idiot and the child of a worker will not be kept out if he is a genius. This is what happens in capitalistic countries now."

After the commissar completed his outline of the school system my next question was about the national schools of the minority groups.

"There are Russian, Turkish and Kurdish kindergartens where the children are taught to read and write in their own languages," he explained. "Each Republic, however, has its own official language. Armenian is the official language of the Armenian Republic, and obligatory in all the schools. Russian is obligatory in all the polytechnical and higher schools, in addition to the official national language. In the university one European language is also a requirement. In this fashion the children of the minority groups in Armenia (and the same is true in the other small Republics) will grow up with three languages, the two official languages, one of

the Republic itself (Armenian in this case), one of the Union (Russian), and the language of the minority group which is their own (Kurdish, Georgian, Turkish)."

"How do you reconcile this intensely national cultural education with your international outlook? Why take such care to teach national languages if all must look forward to being a member of an international society?"

"The aim of socialistic education," he said, emphasizing each word carefully, "is to instill in each child undying hatred for the old social system and to fill him with disgust toward the old social classes, thus to make him ready to fight for the solidarity of the new society in the name of universal socialistic victory.

"This is the philosophy and the aim. The method is to employ the form best known and the nearest to the consciousness of the people, and that is the nationality culture of each republican government."

"Is not your method contradictory to your aim? Would you not find that nationalistic and cultural education defeats the international and socialistic aim?"

"No, the workers and the peasants have already learned that it is to their interest to fight for the victory of class struggle rather than for an individualistic nationalism. They are more enthusiastic about the former. For the present the national-republican form is the immediate and practical one, the international is a possibility for the distant future."

Our interview ended, the commissar then made

UNIVERSAL EDUCATION DAY

School Children on Parade

appointments for me to visit a few of the national minority kindergartens, the Medical Institute, and to interview the director of the cultural division of the radio broadcasting station, the director of the *Hai-kino* (the Armenian national moving picture studio), and the director of the national theater.

A few days before my interview a proclamation from Moscow had declared universal compulsory education for the children of all classes. Up to that day the children of the so-called "disinherited classes"—priests, koulaks, merchants—were, theoretically at least, not included in the privileges of compulsory education.

Out on the street a fanfare was announcing that the parade celebrating the declaration of universal compulsory education had started. The commissar was to make a speech from the reviewing stand.

We went out to the street and I joined the parade. The children marched to the reviewing stand under various banners bearing proclamations. Some of the slogans were carried by the older girls and boys on red banners. The first one read:

"Let us organize the compulsory educational system under the new slogan—'Not a child outside of the schools'."

Others followed:

"Give us nurseries and more of them in order to build the foundation of socialistic education firmly from early childhood."

"It is better to have a full head than a full pocket!"

"The illiterate man is unable to do his work competently."

"Long live free and universal compulsory education!"

Nationalized Medicine

The Medical Institute is another center of educational and professional enterprise, significant from the standpoint of socialistic advance.

A beautiful new building of white stone is already completed, housing the Department of Anatomy. The other new divisions are still under construction. At present the medical school has 500 students. Women have taken especially to medicine among the professions, and at present they constitute what is called a minor-majority group (a little less than half). The state encourages the women because it is thought that they can play a great part in social hygiene propaganda among peasant women.

"The emphasis in medical education is sanitation, public health and the prevention of disease," said the director, who had spent some years in the United States studying public health methods. "Every ill is approached from its social causative factors. The whole range of social hygiene, on which great stress is laid, is approached from the social standpoint. Prostitution is condemned but not the prostitute. The institution which creates the ill is condemned but the individual is saved. Prostitution and syphilis are social ills and heritages; they are the enemies of socialism and therefore the medical faculty and the student body are warring against them.

"Hygiene is the next great emphasis in social medical training, and among our subjects we have now regularly established courses in social hygiene, school hygiene, military hygiene, industrial hygiene,

and what is known as experimental hygiene—that is, such things as pure milk, pure water."

Socializing the Child

Everywhere the leaders would say during a conversation, "Our social system provides very special care for the little children." The kindergartens therefore receive particular attention and symbolize, in approach and method, the new socialistic education.

The first kindergarten I visited was for Turkish children. There were sixty children between the ages of five and seven. This is a special triumph, because the Turkish parents were at first afraid and refused to bring the children to the kindergarten. The director is an Armenian woman, with two Turkish assistants. The children are cared for so well and look so happy and healthy that now there is a demand from the religious leaders and Koulak Turks to bring the children to the kindergarten.

The director said to me proudly:

"This morning the wife of a *molla* (Mohammedan religious leader) brought her four-year-old daughter and begged me to take her to the kindergarten. I told her I have no more places in this particular school, but I would make an exception if she, the mother, would consent to give up her *charshaf* (Mohammedan dress for women, covering their figure and head in public places). To this she demurred, 'You know, teacher, I am willing enough, but being that I am the wife of a molla, how can I?' she begged. The child could not be admitted."

The Turkish children sang for me the song of

the Octoberists* in the Turkish language, the music for which was specially written, making use of characteristic Turkish musical motives.

Every kindergarten has a physician who visits it twice a week. Every child is subject to a regular physical examination once a month. Great emphasis is laid on music and dancing during this period. "The most advanced educational methods from all countries are combined eclectically," said the director. Every kindergarten has a piano. All relaxation exercises are accompanied with music. After every recreation period the children are ordered to silence by musical chords played by the teacher on the piano.

Lenin's picture at the age of three is at the center of the wall known as the "Red Corner." Below Lenin's childhood picture is a huge red star, and on each side of the star are life-sized pictures of Lenin and Krupskeya, his wife. Lenin's wife is specially interested in the education of children and was instrumental in persuading the government to declare universal education for the children of the disinherited classes.

The Armenian kindergarten was a larger one, with one hundred and seventy-five children. The children had a holiday on the occasion of my visit and performed for me.

First they sang the song of the Red soldier:

Red soldier, Red soldier,
You are the pride of the Soviets.
On the battlefield in time of war,
On the soil in time of peace;
You are the defender of our country.

* Children's political organization for the ages two to eight.

Next a little girl sang a worker's song as a solo. The teacher then asked if others wanted to volunteer. One by one volunteers came forward with special songs. The Pioneers' song and songs of the birds, the animals, the flowers, were all given with charming infantile artistry. There were revolutionary songs dedicated to the various political holidays. One dedicated to the October Revolution of course was sung by the whole group:

Our October, our October,
Red and triumphant.
Our infant heads are safe
Because of you today.
We shall defend thee,
Our dear October;
We shall praise thee,
Our red October.

All this was sung to special music adapted for little children and composed by "proletarian musicians." The teachers explained that they do not encourage for children the average adult popular songs, because such songs have mostly the "mature themes of sex and love and are not suitable for children."

Interesting ballets and dances were then given. The grape song and dance which the group performed, portraying the acts of going to vineyards and gathering the grapes, would have delighted Anna Pavlova's heart.

A charming old Armenian folk dance known as "Nazar," which is a combined solo and group dance, was given. The solo dancer comes forth voluntarily, as she is inspired by the music, and each child claps and keeps the time while she dances, until another

comes forth to the center and the previous one retires and joins the group.

The aeroplane song revealed the new machine vein of communistic education. To specially adapted music, most engagingly done, the children rise slowly from the ground until they begin "flying to Moscow," taking guests along to show them the sights of the great city.

More Light from the Press

The office of the official daily organ *Khorhrtayin Hayasdan* [Soviet Armenia] is one of the newly built handsome gray stone buildings. The editor-in-chief was a young man who looked to be under thirty years of age. He had received his journalistic training in Moscow. Wiry, nervous, alert, he reminded one more of the ambitious young business man in America than of the average typical Soviet official.

He was very accommodating and courteous. He spoke first of the great strides—he called them conquests—that the paper had made since its small beginnings ten years ago, when Bolshevism was established in Armenia. In 1921 the paper started with a circulation of two thousand, in 1930 it averaged thirteen thousand. The paper guides the all-important Party Policy, which is directed by a small committee with a chairman. This committee is directly responsible to the executive committee of the Communist Party.

The foreign news section includes news from foreign countries as well as from other parts of the Soviet Union. Then there is the Internal-Home News section, which concerns itself entirely with the

interests of the Armenian Republic. It deals with such problems as reconstruction, finance, industry and agriculture. The literary section is issued every two weeks, with subjects of cultural, educational and literary interest. It has its special editor.

A very important part, in fact the most significant division, is known as the "Division of Mass Contribution." This concerns general information about factories, problems of management and work, organization of the collectives, internal incidents, and problems in industry and agriculture. This division has also its special technical director, but the news contents comes entirely from "local correspondents." There are twenty-five such local correspondents scattered throughout the Republic, and five hundred "mass correspondents." The latter perform a "social duty" for the Republic by reporting little incidents from village life, especially irregularities and abuses on the part of the village Soviets and officials. For this reason they are often subjected to local persecution.

The general editorial policy is determined by the editorial staff, but the editor-in-chief is the responsible person in the eyes of the Party.

Other important papers are *The Majgal* [The Ploughman], an agricultural paper with a circulation of twenty thousand; *Avan-Gart* [Advance Guard], the organ of the young communists; *The Proletar,* a daily published in Leninagan, and *The Pioneer,* periodical for the children's political organization. There is a paper in the Turkish language called *Gazel Shafak* [Red Light]. The important literary magazine is *Nor Oughi* [New

Path]. Then there is an anti-religious paper known as *The Godless.*

I had an interview with the editor of the *Nor Oughi,* one of the finest intellects of the old revolutionary leaders of communism. A silent and reserved man, he sits quietly with half-closed eyes in the midst of lively conversation and plays with a small rosary of black amber. He began haltingly, as if somewhat bored by the interview ahead of him, but quickly warmed up to his subject and became an enthusiastic speaker. He is the leading philosopher and the clearest exponent of Marxian philosophy that I have encountered.

"Nor Oughi," he said, "is a monthly magazine devoted to literary, scientific and historical subjects and interests. The paper directs its editorial policy on the assumption that society at present is divided into two main classes—the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. This paper stands for the protection of the interests of the proletarian revolution. Our most outstanding and talented literary men are contributors and supporters of our platform. Among our foreign friends we count such writers as Upton Sinclair and Romain Roland.

"It is our aim to present not only the vital cultural life of the present but also to a certain extent of the past, always guided by one inflexible principle, that is, the truth."

"But is not the truth relative?" I asked.

"No, the truth is not relative but it can be selective. In other words, there is class truth according to class interests—proletarian truth, and bourgeois truth. But our ideal is to be guided by the absolute

tenets of science and scientific discovery. It is our aim to place science on such a high pedestal that its light can illumine the whole of humanity. Instead of making science serve the class interests of a small clique, as it is at present in capitalistic society, and instead of letting it serve destructive methods of competition and war, we will devote all its energies to conquer the resistance of the earth and the irregularities of nature, in order to make man the complete and happy master of his world.

"This paper will, moreover, wage unceasing war against religion and all sorts of mystic and metaphysical thought. We consider religion a hashish, an opiate, which poisons the vitality of the working man, enervates his will and energy, and deprives him of that acute sense of self-consciousness which is essential to him in order not to lose his grip on reality.

"In philosophical thought our line is that of dialectical materialism and our masters are Hegel, Spinoza, Marx and Lenin."

"Does not Bergson's pragmatic philosophy tune in well with your realism?" I asked.

"Not entirely," he said. "We do not wholly reject him, but he does not appeal to us, for his philosophy is really an idealistic materialism presented in modernistic garb."

"But what has political philosophy got to do with good literature?" I asked.

"For us the whole range of good literature must spring from the essential realities of proletarian existence and interest. We are interested in the art of the past only for purposes of comparison and

not of enjoyment for its own sake. There are, however, in that past, a few rare intellects who are wholly akin to us, such as Oscar Wilde, Romain Rolland. These are individualists, it is true, but their individualism is of a cosmic type and through their own media they give expression to the collective mind of man."

"If you reject the reality of all metaphysical thought, do you hold, then, that the mind of man is a simple affair and easily to be explained and penetrated?"

"No. Since we must be realistic, we admit that the mind of man is complicated and baffling at times, but we do not accept that it is inscrutable, mystical, and wholly obscure and veiled from us. They who take the stand that it is not for man to understand the mind of man are those who serve the interests of the exploiters, for it suits the interests of the rulers and the bourgeoisie to represent life as so dark and so inscrutable and mysterious that man can be saved by religion alone. That gives the rulers control over the ignorant masses, as religion ever strives to keep the masses ignorant and unenlightened."

"Is it true, then, that you do not accept man as capable of idealism?—and if so, how do you reconcile it with your practice of communistic idealism?"

"In philosophy we accept the reality of collective idealism and in a revolutionary period we apply practical idealism as possible only through the collective good.

"It is the strength of the collective good which is capable of creating in the individual the ideal of

sacrifice for the future and for the group. The man who calls himself an idealist in thought but in practice is an unscrupulous exploiter of his fellow man is a fake or is a psychopathic character, a disintegrated individual divided within himself.

"In America the Christians are strong and Christianity enjoys favor. Now the essential tenet of Christianity is respect for human personality. But in that very country they lynch the Negroes and persecute them, and even their scientists strive to prove that other divisions of the human family are inferior to their own or to the white races. That is a classic example of class truth, where science is made to serve the interests of the exploiters.

"We are devoted believers in individual national cultures and the essential worth of every human being. For this reason do we give impetus to the furtherance of individual national cultures. That is the framework, the form of our policy of individual development—but the core, the contents of our political belief, must transcend national barriers and must be proletarian."

"How about your internationalism?"

"The international outlook is the farthest goal; through it man will be saved from hatred of his fellow man."

SOCIALIZED LIVING

SOCIALISTS have denounced social work as an unworthy cause. They have despised social workers and called them "tools of capitalists." The communists are no exception when they come to appraise social work in capitalistic countries. In their own country it is another story.

Social Duty

The Soviet government is already tacitly admitting that the government cannot care for all the details of human welfare and happiness and the intricacies of human relationships. Under communism strong social work is developing under the name of "social duty"; it has, however, an interesting and novel phase peculiar to communism. Instead of limiting social work to a select professionalism and making it a "go between" of class interests, communism is trying to spread out social ideals to all citizens of all classes. Each person of intelligence and leadership is expected to do his or her part of "social duty" to the community.

Of the old and common type of relief organizations, there is still the Red Cross, retained in its old form with its affiliation with the International Red Cross. In form of organization it follows the pattern of the government of the Soviet Union. There is the All-Soviet Union Federal Red Cross office located at Moscow, and then each Republic has its

own national republican Red Cross affiliated with the federal Red Cross in Moscow. Promotion of organization and membership in the Republics is being pushed and guided by the federal Red Cross in Moscow and the appeal is usually based on the need of the Red army for the work of mercy in time of war.

There is a new social organization in the Armenian Republic which has arisen out of present needs and is peculiarly Armenian. It is the American Committee to aid Armenia, known as HOC [*Hayasdani Oknoutyan Committee*]. In form and content it is like any relief organization in capitalistic countries, but its aim and purposes spring from new needs. This organization has its membership only in foreign countries where there are Armenian residents. The central committee is located in Armenia. Its main purpose is to aid Armenia during this present reconstruction period by supplementing needs which are pressing and which cannot be cared for by the Five Year Plan. This organization has for its immediate program the supplying of additional machinery, tractors, automobiles, for the use of social organizations; the building of such things as specialized hospitals, apartment houses, and even new villages. The strongest of these committees are in America and in France, where the Armenian communities are large and prosperous. There are branches in Greece, Syria and Egypt.

Other interesting new communistic social organizations are mostly all-Union enterprises with republican divisions.

There is an organization known as the *Mompre*

which is international in scope, having for its purpose the aid of political prisoners (especially those fighting for the communistic cause) in all parts of the world. Members of this organization wear an insignia.

There is the Society of *Shefs* [chiefs]. Each village has a "social committee" and the shef in each village is responsible for the cultural advancement and general welfare of that village. Such activities as organizing theatricals, lectures, concerts, looking after the welfare of village teachers, public health and sanitation, road construction, supplying special aid during the harvest season, are among the responsibilities of the shef and the Social Committee.

The most interesting of this type of help to the village is the "harvest aid." If a certain locality has unusually good crops and not enough hands to gather in the harvest in time to save it from destruction, or if it is menaced by natural causes such as floods, excessive rains or cyclone, the shef gets in touch with the cities through the papers and puts in an SOS call. Volunteers are immediately organized to lend a helping hand. Usually such volunteers are from the student group. They go in groups of two hundred, five hundred, a thousand, the government supplying free transportation and special trains. They all sleep in the village schools, in the various homes, or in the open air when the weather is good. They reap the harvest, they plant trees, they pick cotton or grapes. In the evening they entertain the village folk with theatricals, musicals, literary events, and so on. Thus they enliven the life of the village and obtain for themselves an intimate knowl-

edge of village life. They do not get paid for this service as individuals but the value of their earnings is estimated and laid aside. That goes into a fund which is later used for the improvement of the village life.

The day before I left, in the middle of October, the students of the polytechnical schools were being mobilized to be sent to the villages for three days to gather the grapes. There was a good crop and not enough helping hands. The fruit was lying waste and a great rain storm was impending which would have condemned the whole crop to decay and ruin. One train went with red flags flying and with songs of the great Revolution and ancient folk songs of harvest gathering.

Among the children's organizations, "The Pioneers," which is essentially a political organization, has also a civic and social program. They come nearest to our Boy and Girl Scout organizations except that in the Pioneers boys and girls are mixed in membership in one organization. To keep the streets and houses clean, to pick up litter from the courts of old-fashioned houses, to plant trees, to help in the upkeep of newly built apartments and office buildings, and to gather up the little stones so common on the roads and the hills, are among their civic and social duties.

There are, in addition, two women's organizations. One of them, again, is not so very different in purpose from similar organizations in capitalistic countries but it is new in name. It is called the "Society of Shelterless Children" (orphans). The task of the organization is like the task of any or-

phans' society, except that the state provides for the material needs of the children. The women's society supplies the needs of human interest, of individual attention in the life of the parentless child. The children are regularly visited by members of the society and are occasionally brought home for week-ends by members, who thus become their personal friends.

The other women's organization sprang from "the realities of communistic life." It is known as the "Society of Delegates." Each delegate has charge of a home where the woman is isolated from the public or the common life because of home responsibilities to which she is bound by tradition, by order of an old-fashioned husband, or by necessity. She does not go out to work. She has small children, and is altogether untouched by the pulsating new social life around her. Each delegate is responsible for such a group of women in the village. She visits in the home, teaches the women how to bring up their children, and explains simple rules of hygiene. She interests them in the organized life of the village and thus gradually draws them out to participate in the group life. The delegate also establishes contact with the children, to see that parents do their duty by them. For instance, the children are encouraged to report cases of child beating, wife beating and forced marriage.

Among the youth organizations outside the purely political ones there is the "Phys-Culture," which has for its purpose the promotion of sports and interest in physical outdoor activity. Folk dancing, instead of the "bourgeois social dancing," football matches

and wrestling are on the promotion list. Each member has charge of a group of workers in a factory and it is his responsibility to get them interested in Phys-Culture for leisure-time activity.

The House of Improvement

I was anxious to see how an ancient institution such as a prison was touched and transformed by the new social order, so I visited one of the largest prisons. First it was explained to us that a prison is now known as a "house of improvement," that punishment is known as a "measure of social protection," and that "capital punishment" is known as "the highest measure of social protection," and is administered only for counter revolutionary activity. The "highest measure of social protection" for counter revolution is shooting at dawn by a firing squad, claimed to be by the Bolsheviks "the most civilized method of punishment in keeping with human dignity." The highest punishment for ordinary criminal offense, such as murder, embezzlement or robbery, is ten years confinement in a House of Improvement.

The House of Improvement is a self-governed educational and social institution. Illiterates are taught to read and write; clubs, classes, theaters, movies, scientific lectures are organized within the walls of confinement and directed by the inmates. There are workshops attached where the inmates work regularly and receive ordinary wages. Part of their wages is given them for spending money and there are some shops within the confines where they buy luxuries for themselves. They even save

enough to send money to their families. The rest of the money goes to a fund. When the offender leaves prison he is given a sum of money according to his special needs, and the government tries to give him a job.

We saw the inmates at work in the factory of the House of Improvement. All work together in the factory and then they are segregated in their cells according to offense. We tried to guess from the mixed group at work who was the thief and who the murderer, who murdered for possession, who from violence of temper and who for love and passion! There was a priest, who was there for counter revolutionary activity, evidently not of a nature to warrant shooting. There was a man with a refined intelligent face who was there for having failed to pay his tax. Another, younger man, was there, according to his own description of his offense, for "contraband selling and importing." He was formerly the proprietor of a factory. His sentence was for three years. There was an elderly bearded man with sad eyes and fine manners winding a spool at the table. We asked him why he was there. He was a banker and he was there for "contrerevoluzione." He advocated an economic policy contrary to Soviet principles, and his sentence was for ten years. Then there was the koulak who had killed his cattle rather than join the collectives and surrender his cattle to them. He had incited the peasants to do the same, and he too had ten years to serve.

We saw the cell where the banker was confined. It was a small narrow room with a regular-sized

window. Each cell has a radio, and one prisoner who is a radio fan told us that he had perfected his radio so that he was able to get New York sometimes. "I listen to foxtrot," he added with a grin.

The theater looks like a new building but it has been converted from the prison chapel into a theater. Here they all come from the cells and mix freely, as in the workshop. In the old régime each was so segregated that he was put in a cage even when he came to chapel. When an inmate is seriously ill he is discharged to a regular hospital. When he is slightly ill and unable to work he is put in the "closed house" and given light work. Others are put to work in the open fields under supervision.

The guards are also inmates. They are usually former soldiers who have served in the Red army and are given military duty. Our guide was the assistant supervisor of the prison, a young and swaggery person who enjoyed immensely our interest and even our company.

"Our prisons have two aims," he said: "to give social protection to the citizens of the state and never to punish but to improve the individual."

A Day in Court

Against this background of a prison we now wanted to see the court where they were tried. Now a Soviet Court is a novel thing and we were all duly excited when we walked into a dingy red brick building where ordinary criminal cases were tried.

We fell upon a scene which could afford entertainment in any first class moving picture or even on the legitimate stage.

The defendant was a "Tziganka," a young gypsy, age twenty-four, who stood before the judges in typical gypsy costume, a large white-flowered shawl on her shoulders, a bright pink scarf on her head and over her dark face.

The plaintiff was Anna Gregorovna, age sixty-one, a lovely, neat old lady, dressed in black with a black scarf over her snow-white hair. Big tragic blue eyes opened in a pale, spent face.

The witness was Alexander Gregoroff, age sixty-seven, the plaintiff's husband, a sturdy creature who looked not more than fifty-five and was neatly dressed in black blouse and pants. Long white whiskers decorated his large broad Slavic face. He looked rather pleased at the attention he was getting from the audience and the court.

The Tziganka was brought in between two armed guards.

The jury was made up of only two persons, both of them very young, picked from workers' clubs. The judge was an official of the court with legal training. He looked about forty years old. He was dressed in a black Russian blouse, with a long black sash over the blouse. He addressed himself to the Tziganka and spoke in a low melodious voice, as he surveyed her with keen, calm eyes. There was a trace of slight amusement on his peculiarly curved lips, as he asked her the regular preliminary questions slowly and with apparent sympathy.

He stated the charge—"defrauding under the guise of fortune telling."

Anna Gregorovna was asked to state her complaint. She spoke in a low monotonous voice with

tears shining in her eyes. Her husband loved another woman. She had her fortune told by the gypsy woman about her husband's affair. The gypsy took an egg and made Anna look into it. She hypnotized her. There was a black spot, that was the snake which would lie on the heart of the other woman. For this prophecy she took from Anna Gregorovna her new coat, all her jewels, and pulled out from her ears her gold earrings.

The judge was plainly amused. Yet he looked at the woman with some pity and murmured,

"Why at your age do you want a man?"

To this Anna's tears, long held sparkling in her eyes, fell over her wrinkled cheeks but she said nothing.

Then the Tziganka was called to speak for herself.

Was the charge true?

The girl admitted she told Anna G.'s fortune, but did not take the jewels, only a coat which the woman herself gave as pay.

The judge asked where she came from. She said she hailed originally from Poland but she had been in Russia sixteen years.

"Do you believe in what you tell these poor people?" asked the judge.

"No," said the girl, for the first time smiles breaking all over her face. "I do not believe what I tell them but I have to make my living."

"Why do you have to make a living by fortune telling?"

"Because I have no work."

"Now you know well, you cannot get by with such

a statement here. There is plenty of work for an able-bodied person in this Union and the state has specially provided for the colony of the Tzigans."

Then the court retired to consult with the jury.

In fifteen minutes the court and the jury returned. The audience was asked to hear the sentence standing.

"Eight months in the workhouse less sixty-eight days for good behavior" was the sentence read by the judge.

The Tziganka burst out crying and the two guards led her out of the room.

Love and Marriage

We were returning from a tea at about half-past ten in the evening when we heard a door open and saw a man running down the street with all possible speed and a girl chasing him. She overtook him, held him by the collar and administered one blow after another. "There, there, and there for your 'may I', ey!" She emphasized mockingly the words, "may I." A crowd gathered and tried to separate them. The man said nothing. The girl explained. "Every night he comes to my window and says, 'Is it possible? May I?' I say, 'Get thee gone, go away,' but again every night he comes just the same and calls through the window, 'May I?'"

"Now, there is your 'may I'!" she gasped, and ran once more toward the man. The crowd restrained her and those around shouted, "Bravo, bravo, *hochagh aghchik* [good girl, brave girl]!"

This was nearest to "free love scenes" that I witnessed during my visit in Armenia and my travels

in the Union. In comparison with scenes one has to witness in America and in all the big cities of Europe the Soviet countries seemed like a graveyard when it comes to sex interest.

Communism considers all sorts of personal indulgence—drinking, dancing, inordinate pleasure-seeking, contrary to the interests of good citizenship, and undue attention to sex is one of the indulgences officially frowned upon.

Whomever you ask, from the lowly workers to high intellectuals, about the practice and institution of free love, marriage and the family under communism, if they are communists they will answer by quoting Lenin. In 1920, in an interview with Clara Zetkin (famous German communist leader) Lenin said on this subject:

". . . the Revolution demands concentration, the straining of all energies by the masses and the individual. The proletarian is an advancing class. He doesn't need drunkenness to deaden or arouse him, either through sexual intemperance or alcohol. Certainly thirst must be satisfied. But does a normal person, under normal conditions, lie in a street and drink from mud puddles? Or even from a glass that dozens of other people have been drinking from? But still more important is the social aspect of it. Drinking water is an individual matter. But two participate in love, and from it arises a third new life. Here the interests of society come in, and the duty to the collective must be considered.

"I don't for a minute want to preach asceticism. Communism must bring the joy of life and vigor which comes from the completeness of the love life. The excess in sex life so often observed at the present time does not, in my opinion, bring with it joy of life and vigor, but on the contrary, lessens them. In time of revolution this is bad, very bad. Youth needs healthy sport—swimming, excursions, physical training of all kinds; a variety of mental interests—study,

investigation, scientific research. A sound body makes a sound mind. We want neither monks nor Don Juans, nor yet the German philistine as the happy medium."

Lenin's "happy medium" as the ideal which would be possible through concentration on the Revolution and through a "variety of mental interests" seems to have been reached in large measure in a brief period of twelve years. At present, the young people are so preoccupied with social duty, are so absorbed by the thrills of building a new country and keeping up a fighting spirit against all the world, that they seem to have no time or disposition left for excessive interest in love making and all sorts of so-called "bourgeois pastimes" so characteristic of the listless and idle youth of the capitalistic countries.

I used to go frequently to the home of a teacher where I ate my noon meals. She came from an old family, the daughter of wealthy bourgeoisie in Baku. She now has charge of organizing the Turkish school, because of her knowledge of Turkish. Her husband, who was a successful business man in Baku, is now a bank employee. They have a grown son and daughter, both attending the university. The boy is studying engineering and the girl medicine. A more charming and devoted family circle cannot be found in any society. Both the girl and the boy, nineteen and seventeen, were *kom-erit* (*comsomal*) —member of Young Communist Society, getting ready for examination in order to enter the Communist Party. I saw the girl often in the evening walking on Rue Apovian with a young student from the university. I had also seen her frequently in her

home, walking in with her young man and after greeting us, retiring to the other room, just as I have seen many an American girl slip in with her "beau" and take him to the dining room, if the parents are sitting with their visitors in the living room!

When I went to say good-bye and took a pair of my used silk stockings as a parting gift to the young lady, the mother said to me fondly: "You know, my heart is broken. She is already grown up. Yesterday she announced to us her engagement to the young man you have seen here. These stockings will go in her trousseau." But the mother was delighted, for the young man was agreeable and promising. This certainly was a new thing in Armenian family life, that a girl should choose her own lover and announce her own engagement to her parents and find them accepting her choice instead of denouncing her and cuffing her ears for the audacity of love. This is so sudden and revolutionary a change that it is considered nothing short of "free love" by some parents in the peasant classes.

In the villages parental control in the matter of marriage still prevails. The government is fighting to eliminate enforced child marriages. In consideration of the background of early marriage traditions which have prevailed in rural Armenia for many centuries, the legal age for marriage in the Armenian Republic under Soviet rule is lower than in Russia. In Armenia it is now sixteen for girls, eighteen for boys. In Russia the legal age is eighteen for both girls and boys.

The Marriage and Divorce Bureau

We went, all agog, to witness the "wildest" experiment of all Bolshevik innovations, the marriage and divorce bureau.

It was interesting to see how many young people were not taking advantage of the institution of "free love" but were coming faithfully to register their marriages like good little bourgeoisie.

The bureau was a large hall with partitions, one section devoted to divorce registrations and the other to marriage. About seven couples were waiting in line outside the marriage bureau. We were invited to walk into the glass-encased office and watch the procedure. Adjoining the registration office was another glass-encased office where sat a very charming young woman. Outside her office was a sign.

"Future mother and wife, consult the doctor before registering, about sex hygiene and future child."

This was the office of the young doctor who did the advising. Consultation is not compulsory but the young people, if marrying for the first time, are advised and urged to consult the doctor. The latter gives her time free of charge as her share of "social duty."

The registrant of the marriage office was a lovely young woman. She was dressed simply in a white shirt and tie and a dark skirt. She did not look more than twenty-five. With smiles lighting up her face, she called in the couples waiting outside, by turn.

Questions were asked and entered in the big register: Name and address, nationality, age, occupa-

tion, class (worker, student, peasant, etc.), birth certificate and trade union book. Each one must show through the trade union book how much he or she earns. The marriage tax is imposed according to income and each pays according to individual earning.

The first couple who came were young workers. They were neatly dressed and clean, but there was no attempt at finery. They gave their ages and names and exhibited their identification papers. The boy gave his age as twenty-one, the girl as twenty-two. The boy worked in a machine factory, the girl in a stocking factory, and they were both members of the Party.

Then we were allowed to ask them questions. Were they going to have a religious ceremony? No, they were communists. Would they have a social wedding or a party for friends and relatives? No, this was their "rest day" and they were going out to the vineyards to celebrate by themselves.

The second couple went to consult the doctor before registering. Each went in separately. The boy gave his age as twenty-one, the girl twenty. Both were White Russians. Both were students. Each had the university student's income of forty-five rubles a month from the government. We asked them the usual questions about church marriage and social celebration. No, they would have no church ceremony and no social celebration.

No marriage certificate was issued. Their names were entered on the big register of the state. Then the number of the marriage license and each one's name were entered on the other's passport. The

seal of the Union and a tax stamp completed the ceremony. The lovely young registrant shook hands with the couple after each registration and congratulated them upon their marriage.

At the divorce bureau we did not take time to see the couples registering. They do not come there by twos. Either party can come to register a divorce and the other party is notified by mail. The divorce is called "a break in marriage." Either party will support the other in case of incapacity. After a divorce is registered a certificate is given and then the applicant goes to the marriage bureau to have his marriage cancelled.

In Armenia, however, old forms of marriage and family life still prevail. Divorce and marriage laws in the Republics are the same as in the Soviet Union as a whole, but fewer persons take advantage of them in Armenia, where family life in the past was one of the strongholds of social life and national solidarity. Everywhere in the Union it is said that when the first divorce laws were announced there was a rush for divorces, but these were mostly the old régime people who were anxious to break old ties of unhappy unions.

"Now people have found," said the director of the marriage and divorce bureau of the Armenian Republic, "that one wife is just as bad as another, and divorce brings as many problems as staying married, so they do not want to go into the divorce trouble! But the young people now have greater freedom in making their own choice in marriage, a freedom which was never possible in Armenian society in the past. Perhaps that is the greatest sign of change which the new régime has brought to us here."

"Old-fashioned large families are still common in Armenia and the birth rate is the highest of all the Union," said the director of the Census Bureau. According to the census of 1926 the birth rate in the Armenian Republic is 53 to 1000. The death rate is 17.2 to a thousand. The rate of growth therefore is 35.8 to a thousand.

"The low death rate among children is undoubtedly due to the devoted care and attention which the country is paying to children," said the director of the maternity hospital in Erivan. "Expectant mothers are urged to register in the maternity hospitals early and receive pre-natal care. Special work is done by maternity clinics, representatives of which visit the homes and the villages, urging the women to go to the hospital for confinement."

I asked why, in his opinion, the birth rate was highest in Armenia.

"The Armenians are a strong race," said the director, "they die hard. Families from twelve to eighteen children are not rare in the villages. The high birth rate here is specially due to the fact that ours was the country most devastated by war, revolution and massacres. Now it is a nation of young people. There has been a selection. The old people have died and the young population is a reproductive population."

HOBNOBBING WITH THE COMMISSARS

DURING intermission at the folk song recital I was introduced to the vice-president of the Council of People's Commissars. I had whispered to my companion during the concert and asked who the man with the appearance of a European diplomat was.

"It is Aramayis," she said with characteristic nonchalance. (They have a most enchanting way of calling their popular leaders by their first names.)

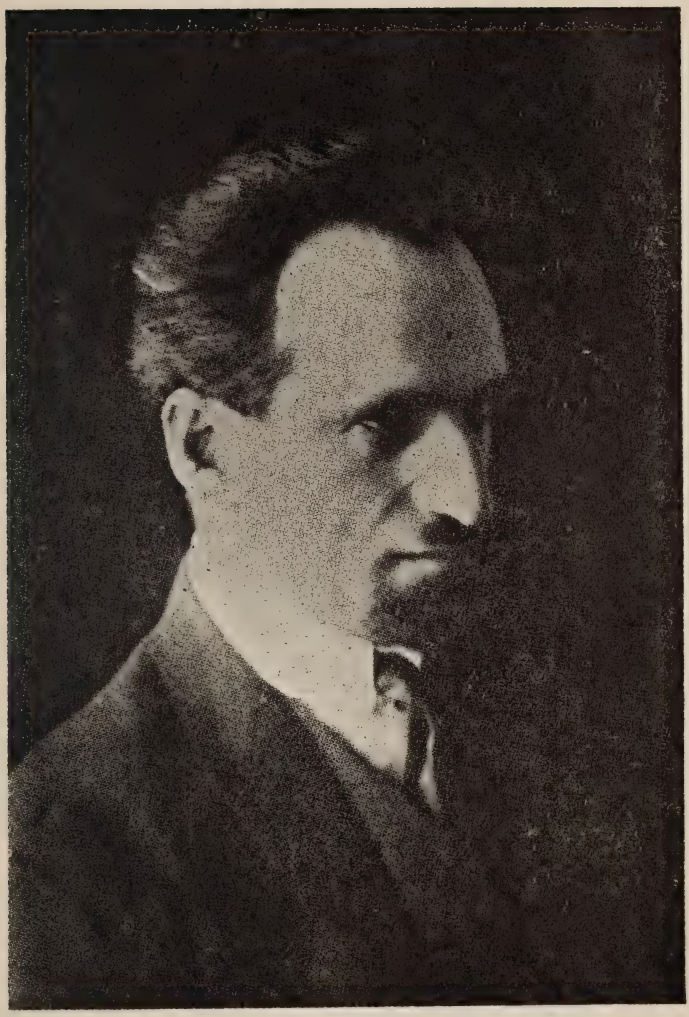
"But who is Aramayis?" I asked.

"The vice-president of the Council of People's Commissars," she said enthusiastically.

"Oh, Aramayis Yerzingian!"

I had heard much of him before going to Armenia and after I got there. He has been one of the few "long term" public servants, which in itself is considered an achievement in the rapidly changing scenes of rising and falling Soviet leaders. He was dressed in a European suit, and wore a beard which ordinarily would brand a man as a bourgeois, but Aramayis Yerzingian has a revolutionary history of over thirty years. His tall lanky form, his beard, his dark brooding eyes, his high nose, his broad forehead, give him a striking resemblance to Abraham Lincoln. Every foreigner who has seen him is at once struck by this resemblance.

Yerzingian is the son of a priest. Despite such a background, the fact that his revolutionary activity



ARAMAYIS YERZINGIAN

Vice-President of the Armenian Republic

predated the Great Revolution has given him popularity and standing. He is one of the figures of the Revolution, and is said to be the man nearest to the peasant in the Armenian Republic. One of the causes of his great popularity is his celebrated sense of humor. In everything he says there is a subtle humor or hidden satire.

He looked at me from the depth of his eyes. "Are you enjoying yourself? Is there anything we can do to make your visit worth while?" he asked.

My heart leaped, for surely there was something which I thought he could do for me.

It had become one of my obsessions to visit the river Arax, which flows at the foot of Mount Ararat.

"I would like to climb Mount Ararat," I said laughingly, "but since I cannot do that, then I must wash my hands in the river Arax.

"In fact," I said, "I have made promises to people back home—to my sister who is named after the river (Araxie is a common Armenian name for girls) and to my artist friend who wanted a bit of soil from the foot of Mount Ararat." Yerzingian smiled indulgently. I could see that he was thinking, "What pitiful bourgeois patriotic sentimentality," and then, almost pleadingly, "You'd better give up that idea," he said.

I felt that I should not push the matter further. Those were the days of the Kurdish insurrection against the Turks, and much guerilla warfare was going on between the Kurds around Mount Ararat and the Turkish soldiers. We often saw bright fires on the Armenian side of Mount Ararat at night and a good many believed that they were Turkish

villages which the Kurds had set on fire.

I met the vice-president again at dinner in the home of the secretary of the HOC (Committee to Aid Armenia). He was very jolly that night. His humor was at full play. I told him about his resemblance to Lincoln.

"Yes, it has been a great asset," he said. "Because of that resemblance I am the only communist the Americans can talk to without terror in their hearts. It gives me easy access to the Americans. It is a very great asset."

Something was said about his long friendship with the host of the evening.

"When I came out of my first prison in 1897, this man," he said, referring to the host, "was a teacher in Tiflis, and he took me to his home and gave me refuge when he risked his own life in doing so."

"In 1897! And you were already a revolutionary at the time and in prison!" I exclaimed, and fell into a contemplative mood. I was trying to figure out his age, or how old he could have been then, as I knew he was supposed to be in his early fifties now. He evidently saw the thought in my eyes and laughed.

"Now do not try to figure out my age, for I was only six months old when I became a socialist!"

I asked him about the role of the Armenian women in the new scheme of things.

He said: "Women have already begun to occupy an important place in political and public life. The careers that have attracted them most so far are medicine, agriculture and teaching. In the field of

politics we have women presidents of village Soviets as well as members of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets."

"How about the family?" I asked.

"Women have been emancipated by new laws of marriage and divorce, and the family will soon be restored to its normal status," he replied. "The family in communistic society is on a higher plane than the family which is the natural product of European bourgeois culture. When freed from its economic shackles and considerations the family will have for the first time in civilized society a chance to be a free institution where the individual may find comfort and love of his or her own choosing."

The Secretary of the Party

A. Khanjian, the secretary of the Communist Party of the Armenian Republic, was one of the few persons with whom I had an official interview by special appointment. His position in the Armenian Communist Party corresponds to that of Stalin in the All-Union Party. He is often referred to as "the Stalin of Armenia." In physical appearance he is a striking contrast to Stalin. He appears very young, between thirty and thirty-five years of age. He is light in build, has black curly hair and big brown eyes, with long eyelashes which cast on his face an expression that can be characterized as anything but fierce! Still, he is the strong man of Armenia, and very conscious of his powers and responsibilities. He hails from Turkish Armenia, a native of Van. He came to the Caucasus as a refugee lad with the great exodus of Armenian refugees who

followed the retreat of the Russian army from Turkish Armenia after a triumphal entry early in 1915. Khanjian joined the revolutionary movement soon after, and rapidly rose to power with the victorious march of the Communist Party.

He received us at his office, which is the Communist Party's headquarters. He was dressed like most revolutionary leaders, in the cool informal Russian blouse. I asked him my chief political question: "What is the future of the Armenian Republic and how is the development of independent national Republics reconciled with the international theory of the Communist Party?"

He spoke with deliberation and care as he replied: "Soviet Armenia is an autonomous state but it is a part of the whole Soviet Union. We are accused of being internationalists bent on destroying national cultures—but let us have a look into the past.

"In the old régime the Russification policy of the Tsars came near to exterminating the Armenian language and Armenian literature. The Armenian upper classes hardly spoke the Armenian language. The Armenian capitalist was never concerned with the upbuilding of his native land. He spent his money in the big cities—Tiflis, Baku, Moscow.

"We encourage and enhance the development of Armenian national culture because that is in accordance with the major policies of the Communist Party with regard to nationality. The official language of the Republic is Armenian. Official correspondence is carried on in the Armenian language. We are giving special impetus to widening the scope of the language by adopting new scientific and political

terminology. We are publishing new scientific books in the Armenian language, and just now one of our greatest philologists is engaged in the preparation of a scientific dictionary in Armenian which will be a monumental work. We would not spend money and effort on all this if we did not consider national culture and its development as important and of permanent value.

"About the future of the Armenian Republic, as realists, just now we are interested in the multitude of practical tasks in our hands and cannot be concerned with the distant future of the nationality problem. The immediate future will be that of national cultural development."

"What is the strength of the Communist Party in Armenia in comparison with the other Republics?" I asked.

"The Communist Party of Armenia has a membership of eighteen thousand full-fledged communists. We are not an open political party. We do not enroll all comers who are willing to pay a membership fee. Our requirements are strict and must test the sincerity of each applicant. We are trying hard to eliminate the careerists. Considering all this, and a history of only ten years of communist rule in Armenia, our strength from the standpoint of membership alone is remarkable. In addition to the adult membership of eighteen thousand we have forty thousand kom-erits, ages sixteen to twenty-three, and sixty thousand Pioneers, ages eight to sixteen. Our ratio of membership to population is the same as anywhere else in the Union, over two per cent of the entire population."

The interview over, we visited socially, and the usual questions about America were asked. What will America do with the twelve million unemployed? What papers would print my articles? Was there anything I needed? Could he help in any way?

"Yes," I said, "there is something you can do for me. I would like an an interview with the head of the Gay-Pay-Oo."

He was amused. "Why do you want to see him?" he asked.

"Just a correspondent's fancy," I said.

He picked up the telephone and made the appointment for nine the next evening.

The Gay-Pay-Oo is the great secret police of the Bolsheviks, whose name is given in whispers and whose methods are never discussed in public. It is the revolutionary political police which succeeded the notorious Tcheka of the early days of the Revolution. Each Republic has its own organization of the Gay-Pay-Oo. The name, which is sometimes written G. P. U., comes from the first syllables of the Russian words, *Gasoutrasdounyi Politicheski Oupravilni,* the English simply being the innocent words, "state political administration."

The purpose of the organization is to deal exclusively and effectively with counter-revolutionary activities and offenses. Its powers are very wide in scope, hence the terrorizing significance that the words Gay-Pay-Oo have assumed.

It is ordinarily difficult to obtain an interview with the head of the Gay-Pay-Oo and after the appointment is obtained it is not an easy task to enter the building.

The House of Green Tables

Exactly at nine I arrived before the big building which is surrounded on all sides by guards with pointed rifles. First of all I had to state my business to the guard at the entrance. Then I had to obtain a pass to enter the building from the officer on duty just within the gates. All the officers wore uniforms of olive khaki. The officer who issued the pass was courteous but grave, and gave the paper to a guard, who conducted me to a waiting room on the second floor. From this room another guard took me to another waiting room. There I waited five or six minutes until a young officer came, this time to lead me to the audience room. Many doors were opened and closed after me, and I noticed that the doors through which we passed were heavily padded and swung noiselessly on their hinges.

At last we entered a spacious room. In the center of the room was a long heavy table covered with green cloth, like a billiard table. In this room and on this table the green cloth had cast an atmosphere of unexpected austerity. The row of straight chairs of dark wood, also upholstered with green cloth, and set stiffly in line all around the big long table, augmented the severity of the surroundings. At the head of the table was a large mahogany desk and at the desk sat the head of the Gay-Pay-Oo of the Armenian Republic, S. Odian (since resigned).

Odian was a tall, large man; his countenance was stern and he kept that expression on his face when he talked. He was not in uniform, but wore a white embroidered blouse. His dress was the only relief from the heavy air that hung around us. The only

other person in the room was a young girl seated at a desk with a noiseless typewriter.

The chief started the interview by asking the purpose of my visit.

I said that I was a "journalist" from America and that I would like to gather some authentic information about the activities of his bureau, "Because," I added, "as probably you are aware, the most fantastic stories and rumors circulate abroad about your organization."

He smiled a bitter smile. Although he knew full well the import of my words he nevertheless asked:

"What kind of rumors?"

"Shootings at dawn," I said simply.

He again smiled the bitter smile. "Yes," he said. "The Gay-Pay-Oo is the vigilant guard of the Soviet State. We have nothing to be ashamed of. It is one of the prides of our rule and sovereignty. We are surrounded by enemies and hence we have greater reasons for being strict and circumspect. In spite of our great need for protection, we are actually less strict with the enemies of our state than other nations are with their subject peoples, as England for instance with the people of India, and the United States with the Negroes.

"We are the protective arm of the whole Union. We are concerned solely with political crimes and sometimes economic-political crimes. Our purpose is not punitive only; it is also aimed at reform. We are very tolerant toward offenders who we have reason to believe have fallen into misdeeds against the state not on their own accord but under provocation from others. These are usually innocent

peasants and ignorant workers who are drawn into the net of political offense by others.

"It has been one of the greatest triumphs of the Revolution to turn an offender into a good citizen. You hear only of a few shootings. Thousands every year are reformed and released, especially those who confess their mistaken activities. Shooting has not the horrors for us that it has for the hypocritical capitalistic countries. It is the most dignified form of social protection, without aiming to be vindictive. It does not torture the individuals as lynching, hanging or flogging, to which the capitalistic governments resort as means of punishment."

Then he concluded the interview with the words: "It is not possible for a state to stand on force alone. We (the Armenian Republic) are now ten years old. The people have had a chance to test us. They are with us. Our system is simpler and more transparent than that of the capitalistic countries. It is possible to see us by looking at us; there is nothing hidden or mysterious here."

When I was taking leave, he asked: "What paper are you representing? Is it the New York *Times?*"

"No, I am a free lance," I said. Then I ventured: "Would you like to see my articles when they are printed? I shall be glad to send you copies."

"Yes, we will see them when they are printed," he said with authority, meaning that his bureau keeps track of everything that is written about the Soviet Republics.

Mother Arax Smiles at Last*

A few days later a telephone call came from the Commissariat of Water Works.

"Comrade Aivazian, the commissar of water works, is going on an inspection tour to the new dam which is being built on the river Arax. He has learned that you wish to go. He will take you and the correspondent from Paris. It will be an all-day trip. They will call for you in twenty minutes if you wish to go."

"Do I wish to go?" I cried; "I am ready this minute."

A five-passenger Packard was at the door in twenty minutes and found me waiting.

"Is that the American way?" asked comrade Aivazian. "We did not expect you to be ready at such short notice."

I felt very flattered. It was interesting to me, how intensely American I felt on such an occasion.

The commissar is only thirty-six years old, an unassuming but fiery revolutionist. He has one of of the most responsible positions in the Armenian government, as next to electricity water is the very life of the reconstruction plan. From a soldier and a revolutionist he has turned into an able administrator. He seemed to know every inch of the land, the location of every cultivated spot, and every cubic meter of water supply.

All day we drove through the deserts of the Armenian land. Here and there we saw patches of cotton fields and newly planted vineyards. These

* Part of the material in these pages is reprinted by permission of the *Christian Science Monitor,* in which it first appeared.

are the *sov-khoz* property, explained the commissar, that is, reclaimed or abandoned land which the government of the Armenian Republic cultivates for the benefit of the state under the Commissariat of Agriculture. The others are the kol-khoz, the collective enterprise of peasants owning the land jointly and working it on a cooperative basis for their own profit under government supervision.

On our return in the evening comrade Aivazian gave us his reminiscences of the Bolshevik Revolution in Armenia. We asked him to tell us something of his personal history. The only occasion of betraying personal pride came when he told us rather casually that a document had just come into the hands of the government which was a proclamation by the old régime placing a price of twenty thousand rubles on his head on account of his part in the Bolshevik uprising in Armenia.

"You were only twenty-four years old then?" I asked.

"I have been a communist ever since I was eighteen years old," he said. "Politically we mature early in this country. We have to be interested in politics; it is all bound up in our daily living."

The correspondent from Paris murmured something about the gratification one must feel upon seeing realized in his own lifetime his dream of national independence.

"We take life seriously and death not at all," said the commissar. "That is why we are able to do all this work. My greatest happiness and satisfaction are over the communist victory and not merely over Armenian independence. This is because communism is a greater good than the freedom

of any small group called a nationality. Communism solves not only the economic but also the nationality problem. The revolutionist on the front line can have no nationalistic preferences. We have to do missionary work. We must go where the party sends us. Our enthusiasm is for the whole Soviet Union. Our joy is for the triumph of all the laboring classes."

"If nationality is not important," I said, "why is it that all the leaders in the Armenian Republic are without exception Armenians?"

He began, as all communists must, with the words which I so often heard ever after: "Because they are of the people and know the customs and the language and the mentality of the people. We are realists. We must begin with the people, take them along at their own cultural level and with their own cultural independence. The international outlook is the future ideal, not the immediate one. At present we believe one nation is just as good as another, no matter what the size in territory, the strength in military and political control, or the color of the people's skin. There is no reason why one group should impose its culture on another. If Russia was to impose its culture on Armenia I would be the first to fight it."

The boundary soldiers with green caps stopped us. The commissar showed his pass and we went through.

Markarian, the engineer of the water works, came forward to meet us and explained this particular irrigation project. It is to irrigate the small desert known as Pokr Sartarabad. It will cost two million

rubles and will turn into arable land twenty-five thousand hectars (two hundred fifty thousand square kilometers) of the desert. The plan was drawn by a woman engineer named Mardirosian. When the land is ready for cultivation, Armenian refugees from Greece and Syria will be invited to settle there. On the other side of the river we saw the Turkish cavalry guarding their side of the boundary.

Because of the aridity of the soil, water has come to be regarded as an almost holy object by the people. The commissar told us his favorite story about the peasants' reaction to irrigation.

On the day of the celebration of the opening of a canal known as "Shir Canal," the president of the Republic was to give the signal for the water to flow. An old wrinkled peasant, who had labored hard all his life on the dry unyielding land, sat with closed eyes on the edge of the ditch through which the water was to flow. The water was finally released amidst cheers, but the peasant sat motionless, still with closed eyes. They motioned to the old man to take his feet out of the ditch, but he sat and did not move. Then they called to him, "Uncle, pick up your feet, the water is coming." Still he sat motionless. The water nearly touched his feet. They went up to him, shook him and called to him, "Uncle, the water is here. Your feet are wet." Finally he said, "Let them be wet, let them be wet, I have waited for this all my life."

We had fish from the river for lunch and wine from the barracks of the engineer.

I dipped my hands in the waters of the Arax.

It has been hallowed in the song and lore of the ancient poets as "Mother Arax," whose "life-giving waters" symbolized motherhood. One of the most popular national songs of the past century, known as "Mother Arax," is still sung by the Armenians in exile in foreign lands.

I walk by Mother Arax
With faltering steps and slow,
And memories of past ages
Seek in the waters' flow.

But they run dark and turbid,
And beat upon the shore
In grief and bitter sorrow,
Lamenting evermore.

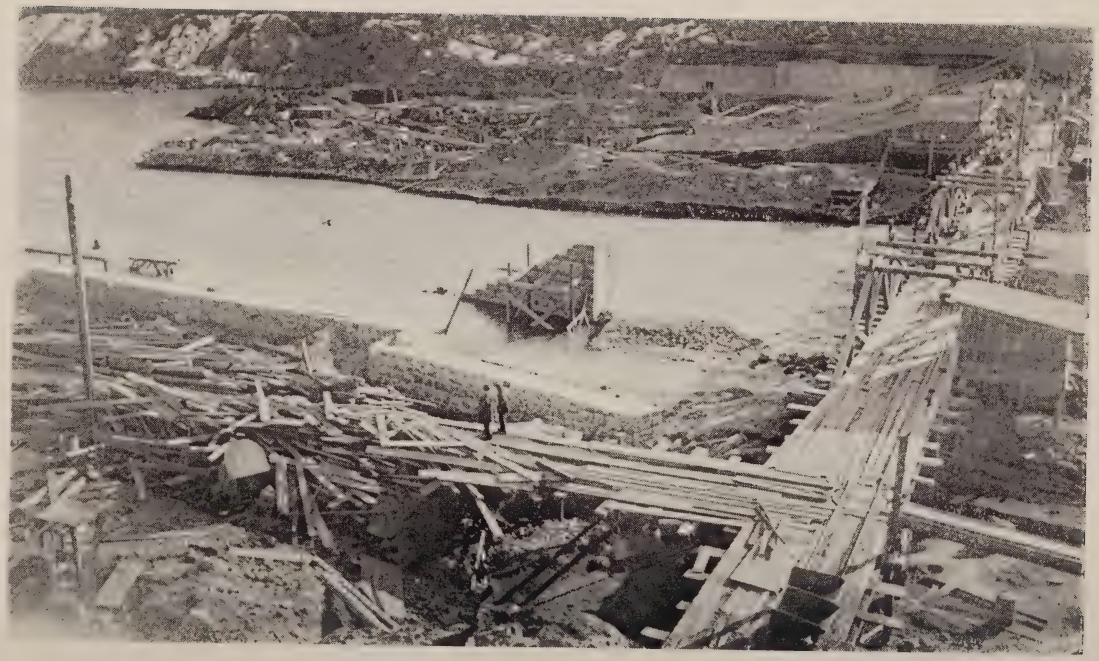
"Araxes! with the fishes
Why dost not dance in glee?
The sea is still far distant,
Yet thou art sad, like me."

Araxes swelled her current,
Tossed high her foaming tide,
And in a voice of thunder
Thus from her depths replied:

"Rash, thoughtless youth, why com'st thou
My age-long sleep to break,
And memories of my myriad griefs
Within my breast to wake?

"Still, while my sons are exiled,
Shall I be sad, as now.
This is my heart's deep utterance,
*My true and holy vow."**

* By courtesy of Alice Stone Blackwell from her book *Armenian Poems.*



"MOTHER ARAX"

Being Put to Modern Use

Mother Arax can at last break this vow and her tears can at last turn into smiles, for truly her "heart's deep utterance" is now fulfilled. Her sons are returning from the long exile to come and settle on the very land vitalized by her waters. She is now stripped of her tragic old romance and poetry and is put to modern practical use. She will wind her way to the heart of the desert, to refresh the burning face of the Armenian land.

The Wise Leader

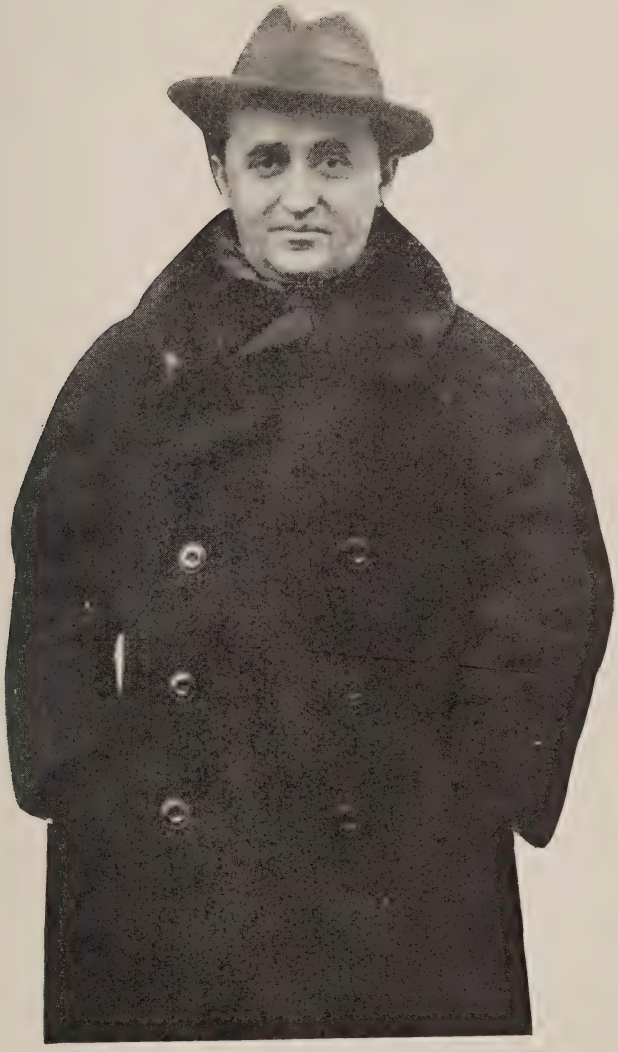
At nine in the evening was my appointment for an interview with the President of the Armenian Republic, S. Der Kaprielian. My host, the president of the Red Cross, and my fellow traveler from Moscow accompanied me. I was told that I was granted one hour for the interview and that I must not take a minute more. The President was very pressed for time but he would want to be courteous, so it was up to me to rise at the end of the hour.

The President's office is located in the building of the Council of the People's Commissars. He received us in his study at his residence, which occupies the upper floor of the same office building.

The apartment was pleasant, with spacious rooms but very simple furniture. The President's study contained merely a large oak desk and a few chairs. The only decoration on the wall was just behind the desk, a very small-sized good photograph of Lenin. The smallness of the picture gave me great pleasure, for everywhere else huge life-sized pictures of Lenin, printed on cheap paper, had wearied my eyes. This was the only real photograph I had seen.

The President was dressed in native costume—dark blue cotton Russian blouse over brown trousers, and a black leather belt. He is not tall but his personality is so alive and his forehead so high that he gives the impression of being thin and tall. His dark and dreamy eyes, his forehead, his wavy black hair falling back from his forehead, give his countenance not only great charm and intelligence but a touch of the ascetic. He is forty-six years old and very popular. He is one of the old-timers in the Communist Party, having always belonged to the Bolshevist wing of the Social Democrats. He has been in his present office for four years, which indicates unusual standing and strength in the party. The Armenian people speak of him as the "wise leader," which is akin to the title Lenin holds as "the leader." His qualities combine a practical mind with vision, and unswerving devotion to principles, which is essential to the success of the revolutionist.

I was stirred to the depths of my being as I entered the room where the President sat at his desk. Here was the head of the Armenian State, alive and real! In spite of the fact that I had been already three weeks in Armenia and was getting myself accustomed to the realization that the impossible dream of the free Armenia had now come true, this occasion of facing the President became an overwhelming experience. My knowledge of the history of the past six hundred years of Armenian subjugation to the great tyrants of the world—the Sultans and the Tsars; my memory of the unrealizable dreams of the poets and the songs of the patriots



"The Wise Leader"

SAHAG DER KAPRIELIAN

President of the Armenian Republic

with which I had been rocked in my cradle, leaped to my consciousness in a moment of kaleidoscopic vision, like that of a drowning man. I found it hard to grasp the reality of the present. There was a moment of silence after the President rose and greeted me. Then I remembered that this was to be an official interview! In order to hide my emotion I immedately sat down at the other side of the desk facing him and opened my notebook, to take down the interview. The President suppressed a smile.

"Please, my dear lady, if you don't mind, don't let us have an official interview. Close your notebook and let us talk," he said benignly.

I was very pleased at this informality, which immediately put me at my ease. I closed my notebook and later wrote part of our conversation from memory. I remember well that his next words were:

"How do you like our country?"

"It is very good."

"Yes, it is good, is it not so? And what brought you here from so far away?"

"The wish of many years and the sense of obligation to my ancestors to see their dreams realized," I said laughing, trying to give a light and gay air to my grave words.

He laughed too. The expression of patriotic sentiment is not considered good form by communists. The younger element would probably dub such talk as "patriotic bunk," but the President was lenient because he understands that this is the way the Armenians abroad should feel and talk.

It was now my turn to ask questions.

"I know that this is not to be an official interview," I began, "but there is one question which interests me greatly, and it is of very serious concern to all the Armenians abroad. That is the question of Armenian refugees now scattered in Greece, Bulgaria, Syria and France. What plans have you for getting them into Armenia? As you know, Greece wants to be relieved of its refugee burden. This question interests me immensely, first, because as a student of immigration problems, after watching the plight of immigrants in the United States, I am convinced that in our present era there are no more lands of opportunity open to individuals or groups except their own; and second, I am naturally interested in the fate of our own people. When I was in Geneva I had an interview with Major Johnson, who is now taking Dr. Nansen's place on the Refugee Commission of the League of Nations. He became intensely interested in my projected trip to Armenia and asked me to find out from this government, informally, if the aid of the Refugee Commission for the transportation of Armenian refugees from Greece to Armenia would be acceptable to you. Major Johnson told me that the Refugee Commission was planning a new international campaign to raise a large sum of money as a memorial to Dr. Nansen. This fund is to be used for the transportation of refugees to Armenia. The commission hopes that it will be able to accomplish in Dr. Nansen's memory his plan which was unrealizable in his lifetime."

The President smiled sadly at my exuberant confidence in the importance of the League's promises.

"We don't believe in accepting aid from the League.* Neither do we believe that the League has any intention of helping us," he said. "Dr. Nansen was a good man and he believed in us, but his very goodness of heart worked against the possibility of realizing his scheme. He was visionary and impractical and could not play the game with the diplomats at Geneva. For that very reason, perhaps, they put him at the head of the Refugee Commission.

"We do, however, have our own plan for gathering in the refugees with our own means. We need working hands and we would like to give a chance to the refugees if they want to throw in their lot with us, but we need a little time. In 1931 we shall be able to take care of eight thousand refugees.†

"Only one thing the refugees must understand.

---

* Dr. Nansen's scheme proposed to the League of Nations a five million dollar irrigation project by which the great desert of Armenia, the Sartarabad, would be made habitable, and fifty thousand refugees from Greece would be transported there. Dr. Nansen thought this would be a test of the League's honest intention with regard to the promises made to the Armenian people during the Lausanne Conference (or even before Lausanne, during the great war). The plan was for a time considered seriously by the League. Dr. Nansen was sent to Armenia in 1926 accompanied by a commission of engineers, who made a report to the League that the plan of irrigation was entirely practical but that five million dollars would be necessary to begin the work. The League did nothing about raising the money. Dr. Nansen died in 1929 and the League's promises died with him. Before his death Dr. Nansen wrote his experiences of this visit to Armenia. (See *Armenia and the Near East*, by Fridtjof Nansen, published by Duffield and Company, 1928.)

† This has already been realized with amazing punctuality. Three boats sailed in the fall of 1931 and the spring of 1932 from the Greek ports of Piraeus and Salonica, taking the Armenian refugees home to their land.

What we want are working hands and not small traders and merchants."

"But suppose for a moment," I pursued, "that the League really will want to help and the project of raising five million dollars in memory of Dr. Nansen succeeds. If the League offers it to you will you accept it?"

The President laughed again. "But my dear young lady, they will not make such an offer!"

"Let us suppose for a moment that they will."

"Yes, if we must suppose, then I am ready to say we would accept. We are practical men of affairs, and whatever helps the country and the people, that we will do. We have no right to refuse such an offer, no matter where it comes from. But we do believe that it is not desirable to take it from the League if we can do it ourselves."

Then I asked him my second question, which I tried on all the leaders to whom I spoke—workers, peasants, party members, sympathizers.

"Why do you want to build the country with such tremendous speed and subject the people to the necessity of making such sacrifices? Why don't you allow them to enjoy the fruits of the Revolution now and let reconstruction take a more normal slow pace?"

The President's reply to this was literally the same as that of all the others, and I give it here as the representative answer.

"Because we are obliged to succeed QUICKLY. We are surrounded by enemies on all sides. If we don't succeed quickly the enemy will overtake us. The policies of the government are not the cause of the

people's sufferings. The real causes of the present prevailing hardships come from two sources. The first is our poor heritage and the second the capitalistic world, whose purpose it is to defeat our work. Our people are obliged to make sacrifices in order to build their house and put it in order. After that they will enjoy life as they wish."

It was ten o'clock and I rose to go.

"Where?" said the President in surprise.

"I was told to rise at the end of the hour," I said laughing; "I do so reluctantly."

"No, Mrs. Der Kaprielian wishes to receive you; we shall have tea," he said.

He led us to the apartment, where his wife was waiting to receive us.

She is a charming lady and a genial hostess. She had been a teacher and always a comrade to her husband when, as an old revolutionist, his lot was poverty, prison and exile. She is filled with obvious pride and admiration, and her dark eyes sparkle every time they rest on his face.

The tea time passed very pleasantly. The President told us about the amusing side of his position, how the people come and wake him up in the early hours of the morning for personal problems. One morning at seven a woman knocked at his door, with a two-month-old baby in her arms. The maid opened the door and woke the President. The woman said: "My man beat me and put me out. Now here I am with my baby. It is for you to decide what is right!"

The President's working hours are long. He spends two hours every morning, from seven to nine,

in his study, then from nine to six in his office. In the evening he comes home and plays for half an hour before dinner with his five-year-old daughter Nairi, of whom he is very fond. After dinner he retires to his study again and works from nine to midnight. His days are taken up mostly by meetings and by receiving delegations from workers and peasants.

He told us the story of two peasants who had called that morning. They said that they were sent from the village to tell him about their plight. Winter was coming and there was nothing in the stores to buy for clothing. The people were dissatisfied. How could they pull through the severe winter months without warm clothing? The President said to them: "Yes, we know that there is not sufficient clothing to cover us all, but which would you have—the Tsar's armies to collect most of your earnings in taxes; or foreign armies to take the land from your hands, turn you into slaves, make you labor for one man who will make his fortune out of your labors and perhaps will give you a new coat; or, would you like to keep your land, work on it yourselves and make the sacrifices necessary to build it for the future, in which case you will have to go with your old ragged wraps this winter. Now which will you choose?"

"We will have our rags! We will have our rags!" said the peasants.

"Bring in the others from the village," said the President, "and I will explain it all to them."

"No, comrade President, we will tell them what you told us." And they went out content.

HOBNOBBING WITH THE COMMISSARS

The Vineyard of the Commissars

An invitation came for a picnic in the vineyard of the commissars. The simplicity and plainness of the lives of the officialdom in the Soviet Union is unparalleled anywhere else in the world. Of certain luxuries, although hardly anyone else enjoys them in the Union, high officials have even less than common citizens. They live in the plainest sort of crowded apartments, sometimes in one room rented from another family. Their labors are even more exacting and their responsibilities heavier than those of any responsible official of a government in the outside world. So many have impaired their health under the strain that the government is now compelling them as a social duty to take seriously their holidays and off hours for rest. Half an hour outside the capital, a charming six-room house for retirement and rest has been built in the midst of a very lovely vineyard on the slope of a hill, for the use of the commissars and the high officials. It is often used for government guests from the neighboring Republics. To this vineyard I was invited by a small group, for a picnic. The editor of the literary magazine, one of the commissars, the foreign news editor of the official government organ, a writer from Moscow and two ladies made up the party. Here we had no grand feast, simply some dry meat, cheese, a bit of cognac and of course grapes and nuts, peaches and figs.

We talked freely and asked questions.

They—"What are you going to tell about us in America? We don't want praise. If you tell the truth, give the picture as you see it and we shall be

satisfied. Would the capitalistic countries print your articles if you speak favorably of our system?"

I to them—"But our press is free; we have freedom of speech. Unlike you, we can say anything we please, and even the conservative papers will print favorable articles. We even have a Communist Party which runs candidates during elections."

"Oh, yes, but how about Sacco and Vanzetti? How about monkey trials of university professors, and the Ku Klux Klan? Yours is only capitalistic liberty."

"Would you like to have a translation of my articles for your magazine, if they are printed?" I asked the editor.

"No, we cannot print from capitalistic publications."

"Then where is your liberty?"

"We are under a dictatorship in this transition period. We have no liberty and admit it and we are not hypocritical like the capitalistic countries. We face realities."

"If you would establish a better social order than the one we have under capitalism why don't you allow freedom and equality? Why the dictatorship of the proletariat? Why is the worker made the ruler instead of making him rule equally with all the other classes, at least the intellegentzia, for instance?"

"First of all because the worker is in the majority. Second because he is the creator of the necessities of life, and the power of control should belong to him. This period of inequality is only temporary. When communism is firmly established then there

will be no classes. As to liberty, we cannot have freedom as long as the outside world remains our enemy."

"Why are you so hard against your enemies? Why are you not different from other governments if you are better than they? Why are you so concerned about Sacco and Vanzetti when you are shooting down your own people by the hundreds here every year?"

"The whole world is our enemy and if we don't destroy them they will destroy us in no time. Even then, we are more lenient than the capitalistic countries. Every state is merciless against traitors if it would survive. We frankly admit that we have to kill those who resist us, but America, which poses as a liberal, puts in the electric chair two poor communists as soon as she finds they are enemies of her established social order. Our enemies are powerful, we have to deal severely with them, but the capitalistic countries, even amidst their great power and security, find it necessary to destroy any feeble protest against their social order."

One of the men had been in America in his youth. He described it thus: "It is a tiresome, monotonous country. Every person is dressed exactly alike, every woman has the same hat and wears the same belt! The sum total of all human energy there is bent on one thing—catering to bodily comfort through the accumulation of money power. It is a comfortable country but not stimulating or interesting. There is no striving *en masse* for cultural and intellectual development."

Then he began poking a little fun. "The papers

in America give pages and pages to describing some rich person's wedding and telling what the ladies wore at the wedding." This seemed incredible to the others. They thought he was joking. They asked me and I admitted that it was true. We were all tremendously amused.

"But isn't it true that there must be a leisure class in every society, free from the cares of daily living in order to create beauty and to devote its energies to science?" I asked.

The philosopher in the group replied: "That has never been true. The great creators have always come from the working people, and what is the use of science when it serves the interests of one class only? Science should be placed on such a basis that it should enlighten the whole of mankind instead of striving to enslave one class for the whims and pleasures of another. When man ceases to be a slave for his fellow man and when every normal individual is free to use his creative instincts for the good of the whole, then only can the world see beauty and progress. Then only will science begin to serve humanity with yet undreamed-of conquests. It will change the face of the earth and provide enough for all its inhabitants.

"At present the only creative force is in the hands of the workers. The wheel of history is now in the hands of the workers and it cannot be turned in another direction."

"Well then," I asked, "why can't you let your own people, these same workers, have some comfort now? Why don't you let them enjoy the fruits of the Revolution? Why don't you let them have their

beliefs in religion if they want to have them and allow them to be enlightened by science gradually?"

"We have to have enough for all in order to have comfort for any one. We are backward, therefore we must advance quickly. We have to succeed before the enemy overtakes us. As to religion—religion is the enemy of science and they cannot go hand in hand; one has to destroy the other."

"If you believe in a purely materialistic philosophy of life, how is it, then, that you demand from the individual the sacrifice of the present to the future, that this generation die for the good of the next? That is a purely spiritual attribute. Sacrifice comes from the spirit, else the human being would not be able to forego his own desires for the sake of the general good. How do you reconcile your social idealism with your ecenomic realism?" I asked.

"Our idealism is purely social, not mystical or metaphysical. Therefore it is realistic and naturalistic. The only sacrifice asked of the individual is for the collective good. The highest good for the individual comes from the collective well-being of the whole social order. Therefore in communistic society each individual works for his own welfare while he works for the collective good. He does not submit to slavery in this world in the hope of inheriting the next world, as capitalistic religion teaches him. The true communist does not need religion for salvation from sin, for he can do no social wrong. He needs neither stealing nor cheating, for he will have enough for all his needs."

"But why should one generation suffer for another? Let each generation save itself!"

"This generation must suffer because it cannot be saved. This is not the fault of communism but the fault of the régime which went before. It is our bad inheritance. This generation is condemned to misery in every country. The common people in capitalistic countries are just as poor as we all are here, and they are without hope. Our only difference is that we all have an equal amount, we have no one who has too much of everything."

We talked until darkness fell and we had to find our way with lighted matches toward the city shining with its abundant electricity.

As we turned a lonely path we heard chanting and caught the scent of incense. We had come upon a little church having its evening worship. I wanted to go in. The three men, communists all, stayed outside the church walls in the pitch darkness while a few of us went in and stayed a few minutes. When we returned they were patiently waiting for us. Each of us had a faint smile for the other. They were thinking, "Poor unliberated bourgeoisie," and I had a thought for them, "How can such uncompromising materialism save the individual from slavery to the machine; how can the human spirit attain beauty without mystery or ritual?"

VISITING WITH THE PEOPLE

THE "art of living" is an important item in the equipment of any pilgrim, and it is doubly so for the tourist in Soviet lands. It is not possible to understand and enjoy life, such as it is there at present, without incorporating as a philosophy of life, at least in part, the old Russian *nichevo* [doesn't matter], which is still characteristic of life throughout the land. Without entering somewhat into their conception of life values, it is not possible to decide that certain things do not matter, that this or that is a trifle, and that physical comfort need not be the last word of a human being's life equipment.

There was no room in the hotel of the Armenian capital when I arrived. Every day for fourteen days the government promised me a room in the best hotel. Every day I telephoned without discouragement to the business manager's office and every day he said: "Tomorrow it shall be. A room will be vacated. It was to be today, but a comrade came from Tiflis last night and had to be accommodated." These and similar words were said for fourteen days. Meanwhile I enjoyed the philosophy, or the exigency, of life which made such promises and such postponement possible.

On Top of an Old Trunk

I was a guest of the president of the Red Cross during these fourteen days. My host was an eminent doctor whose family name is found in fifth

century Armenian history. That history says of his ancestors, of the old Armenian nobility: "The princes of this dynasty have never been found wanting in their loyalty to the people. No prince of this dynasty holds against his name a record of exploitation of the people." An incredible record for that epoch—and this descendant of the last line of the dynasty had not broken that record.

The Soviet government had honored him and his brother by assigning them to positions of high responsibility and had not found them wanting in loyalty. But the doctor and his sister had only a two-room house at their disposal. I slept, therefore, on top of a trunk for fourteen nights and liked it. The trunk, too, was a survival of old Armenian royalty. It was covered with beautifully carved silver, of old Armenian design. It was square and flat on top and served well for a bed. The thought of the past, symbolized by the silver-covered trunk and its present rôle as a bed, gave me such delight that the little discomfort which was inevitable did not matter. What more could a "pilgrim" want? My trunk became my vantage point and I could ask nothing better for the first two weeks of my trip than gracious and devoted hosts. Soon all their friends took me in. Every day I had an invitation to dinner. Every evening we had more than one place to choose for tea. Writers, actors, students, workers, officials, were all my hosts, and I have known no more sincere and more charming ones in the world. There are five official meals a day. Breakfast from eight to nine, coffee at twelve, dinner four to five, tea at nine and supper—fruits and cheese—at midnight.

A Feast in the Vineyards

With the exception of sugar there was no scarcity of food in Armenia at the time when grave want had reached a crisis in Moscow and the other big Russian cities in the north. In fact I learned afterward from tourists returning from Moscow that there was rumor in the north that food was plentiful in Armenia, and that one American reporter took the long trip south to see whether it was true, and why.

There were no long cues before the stores in Armenia, such as we saw before half-empty stores in Moscow and Leningrad. The only cues I saw in Tiflis and Erivan were before the public bathhouses. The complaint in the north was always about lack of food, in the south about lack of clothing.

I believe the easier supply of food was due largely to the fact that Armenia is still a completely agricultural country. The two big cities, Erivan and Leninagan, are located in the midst of fertile valleys surrounded by vineyards and farms. Transportation for the Union has not yet been developed to the point of providing easy transfer of such perishable foods as Armenia produces on the five-day trip to the north.

At the time of my visit it was the grape and peach season. The country has also considerably developed its dairy products—butter, cheese and eggs. From July to October grapes, peaches, apples, nuts, are plentiful. Even here, however, the Armenians were not allowed to consume all that the country produced. The best had to be contributed to the export trade in exchange for the precious machines

that must be imported. Still there was enough left in the country for home consumption.

The vineyard parties to which I was frequently invited would alone have kept me well fed throughout my visit. Vineyard parties are an old tradition in Armenia. They remain the most abiding of the pleasures of my visit. I had frequent invitations and I went to many, but the most memorable were the party in the vineyard of the "koulaks," the barbecue in the vineyard of the engineer, the tea in the vineyard of the dead poet, and the picnic in the vineyard of the commissars.

Each vineyard had a bit of primitive equipment —a little house where the family lives during the season, a table out in the yard, usually under a large shady nut tree, a sofa, a rug or a home-woven carpet on the grass, and wooden benches around the table.

The first party to which I was invited was in a vineyard owned by a large and prosperous family. That is, of course, as far as prosperity goes in that country. They would have been classified as landowners in the past, but at present, although called koulaks by some of their neighbors, they were neither koulaks nor peasants, for culturally they were city people. They were not koulaks because they did not exploit other labor; they owned and worked the land themselves. This sort of small holding by individual families, whether a vineyard or a house, is rather common in Armenia under communism. The land they cannot own, as it belongs to the state, but any number of persons can build their own homes or cultivate their own vineyards. The vine-

yard of this particular family was a large and rich one. We sat in a circle around the table under the nut tree and ate grapes, figs, nuts, peaches, which were piled high on the table.

There was the vineyard of the dead poet. He was a man of the old régime but he had been a poet of the people. The government had honored him on the fortieth anniversary of his literary career and presented to him as a gift this vineyard of forty acres, where he wished to retire and spend the rest of his days. He had died soon after that, in his own vineyard, and his wife and four young daughters now keep and work the property. The family has turned it into a sort of literary center. Writers are invited to spend their holidays there. On the day we were invited a party of German university professors and engineers came. I never saw a group of more surprised and pleased people.

Then we had barbecue in the vineyard of the engineer, whose three brothers worked on the land and kept the ancestral property going. There were fifteen of us at this picnic. In the evening a big fire was built and we sat around it and sang the old minstrel songs of Armenia and some new songs of socialistic triumph. On such occasions I would remind myself of my history in order to make myself more acutely conscious of my surroundings. I would sit at the plentiful table; I would be lulled by the mellow warmth of the September sun; I would be charmed by the enthusiasm of the simple hospitality that surrounded me, and I would ask myself, "Was this the reason why our ancestors named their country the 'Paradise Land'?" I would remind myself

that here had been Ararat from the days of Noah and here the Armenian people worked out their destiny with fire and sword, and I would seek a message from the past. What of the future?

A Tour of the Villages

A new shining Buick donated by the Armenians of Detroit to the Red Cross of Armenia took us on the tour of the villages. The party was made up of the chauffeur (he must have first mention, for his is the power behind the throne in all the Soviet Union), an official of the All-Union Red Cross from Moscow, an official of the military section of the Armenian Red Cross from Erivan, a correspondent from Paris, and myself. The two officials had been appointed to go to the villages on an inspection and promotion tour and invited us to join them.

The official from Moscow, who was also a noted writer, was not a member of the Communist Party but a loyal sympathizer. The military representative of the Armenian Red Cross was the real thing, a communist "from the cradle." At the age of eighteen he had joined the Communist Party and at twenty-one had been one of the leaders of the Bolshevik conversion of Armenia. In the early days of the Revolution he had worked in the civil department (police duty) of the famous and dreaded Tcheka. A most retiring man with the mildest manners, one could find no more complete contrast between the real man and the mental picture one would be led to draw of a revolutionist, a red and a tchekist.

"So now, I have the honor of being in the company of a tchekist," I used to say, "therefore I am perfectly safe?"

He only smiled and said nothing. Always silent and modest, he was the source of continued surprise and delight to my fellow correspondent and myself. Always ready to do the dirty job, first to jump in front of danger, he looked after our comfort and created every possible opportunity for us to see whatever we wanted to see.

Day after day we had nothing to do as we drove but to talk. We talked of politics, of America. He gave us a clear exposition of communist philosophy and doctrine.

We stopped in a good many places for sightseeing. Many of the villages have a history. Here was the birthplace of one of the old conquerors, there the remains of an ancient fortress, the birthplace of a great poet, or of a famous Catholicos. Here one of the heroes of the early revolutionary movement lived. How many of these obscure villages have given birth to famous sons and have made history!

Often little children, dishevelled and ragged, crossed our path and stopped our car. They wanted to see the new wonder at close hand.

"Who could imagine that such children could be turned into orderly citizens," I remarked one day.

"Yes," said our communist friend confidently, "from these urchins emerge the great leaders of the people, as you have seen in the history of these villages."

Our first stop was Leninagan, the most important industrial city of the Republic. Here the first problem was to find rooms in the hotel. A bed was found for me with five others, in the women's dormitory

of the newly built hotel. My room-mates were two young Armenian *agronoms* [agriculturists] and three lively Russian show-girls who were touring the country with a vaudeville company. They had brought with them a baby phonograph which they never let stay idle for a minute. They ate and danced incessantly in the dormitory to the tunes of the phonograph. It was interesting to be in such gay company, but it was impossible to sleep or rest.

My traveling companions had each gone to look up friends or make arrangements. Suddenly I remembered that here in Leninagan was a young boy whose parents lived in Youngstown, Ohio. For the last six years the parents had tried to bring the boy to the United States but had never been able to get a satisfactory report. Once a letter came that the grandmother would not let the boy go, as he was her only comfort on earth; another time, that he had trachoma, or that he could not get a passport from the Soviet government.

I thought hunting him up would be a good lark, but I had no address. I had, however, addressed many letters to the boy for the parents, and I remembered that it was Twentieth Street. I figured that Twentieth Street in a small city would not be very long and in all likelihood the neighbors would know each other. I took a carriage and told the man to drive to Twentieth Street. He did not ask me to what part of Twentieth Street I wanted to go, and I took this as a good sign that I should easily find the place. On the way we passed from the market-place and saw two of my companions doing the marketing for the journey. They looked at me

in great surprise. Where could I be going in a carriage all by myself, in a city where we had just arrived? I waved my hand and they thought that I was going sight-seeing.

We stopped at the first house on Twentieth Street. I asked the people if they knew where Hrant K—— lived. No, they did not know. Then I tried about five more houses. In one court I found three families in a row of three little cottages. One of them remembered. They pronounced the name differently but it was the boy I was looking for. Yes, his parents lived in America and sent him dollars to spend and he was a good-for-nothing, because his parents provided and he would neither go to school nor to work, although he was now sixteen. This was all very valuable. "Now, where is he then?" I asked.

Well, they did not know. He never stayed in one place, he wandered from village to village, but I could ask the uncle's wife.

"But where is the uncle's wife?"

"The little girl will show you."

A girl of about six got into the carriage, or rather flew into it! Her joy was so great that I was afraid she would fall out of it from excitement. Then the other children began whimpering at being left behind. We stopped and took three more in the carriage, and I, in the role of the fairy godmother, drove through the streets to the home of the uncle's wife.

Here was I, just arrived, in the streets of Leninagan, going about in a carriage from home to home on an unknown mission. And where were the vigilant eyes of the Gay-Pay-Oo, I wondered. How

would they know what I was doing in these streets? Where were their celebrated shadows? There were none to be seen!

We drove on to the very end of Twentieth Street. There we turned and the child pointed to a court. We stopped to inquire. The uncle's family had moved, and we had another child attached to the party to show us the new address. But all this was of no avail. We did not find the uncle's house although all descriptions corresponded to the description of the boy I was seeking. Finally I returned the children to their homes and decided to give up the hunt. My cabman, however, was not anxious to unload his passenger. So far the adventure had cost me five dollars.

He shook his head, "Now that is too bad," he said, "all that money gone for nothing! I wish you could find them somehow."

"Never mind," I said, 'I enjoyed the ride."

"It cost you ten rubles," he said; "at least it should not be in vain."

"Well," I said, "think hard. What can we do next? In a small place like this it should not be hard to find a person."

"I know," he said, then with a glint in his eyes he added in a lowered voice, "you can probably get the address from the central registration bureau of the Gay-Pay-Oo."

That was an idea. I knew the cause of his hesitation.

"We will go," I said.

The building was old and rickety and it was full of people waiting for their turn. I was worried

when I saw the crowd, thinking that all these people had been called for questioning, probably, on all sorts of reported counter-revolutionary activity. But I saw that there was no fear on the faces of the people. There were young women with infants in their arms and men and women of all ages. I learned that this was the bureau of registration and not of inquisition. People had come to report changes of address, birth and death, and to obtain registration certificates for new members of the family. All this was vital for trade union and ration-card purposes. Therefore every one reported faithfully.

When I entered, a young man was being questioned.

"What is your occupation?" asked the officer.

"Shoemaker."

"What is your work now?"

"I have no work."

"You said you were a shoemaker."

"So I am."

"Don't you work at your trade then?"

"No."

"Where did you learn shoemaking?"

"How do I know where. I learned it somewhere."

At this point the officer began looking askance at the man and the man was scared. A young man without work at a time where there is shortage of workers! It was not a good record, but the officer said nothing and entered his registration. I saw that the line was long and I would not have a chance before the day was over. I walked forward and addressed the officer.

"Pardon me, but could you give me preference?

I would not ask it except that I am a guest from America and I am in the city only for the day. I am very anxious to find some one whose parents are in America. I just want his address."

"Come this way," said the officer politely.

A woman with an infant began to complain, "I have been here since morning with my baby in my arms, how long must I wait?" Another added, "Yes, she is right, let the foreigner take her turn. She is a *meschenka* [bourgeois woman]."

A woman with a face scarred by small-pox came forward and said:

"Never mind, never mind, let her have preference. What of it? She is a guest and we can wait."

Then she addressed me in Russian.

"I do not understand Russian," I said.

"Don't they speak Russian in America?" she asked in Armenian.

"No," I said, "they do not speak English in Russia, and they do not speak Russian in America!"

This amused the crowd and every one laughed.

"Now," said the officer, "your errand please."

I gave the name of the boy, the names of his parents, his approximate age.

He went to the files and produced a card.

"Now what identification have you?" he asked. "Your passport?"

"It is at the hotel," I said; "I can go and bring it."

"Just a moment." He took out a blank and began filling it out. "Your name, age, address, occupation, class," he requested.

"I don't belong to any *class,*" I said.

He looked impatient, thinking that I was making

fun of the communistic social order.

"Please, your class," he said sternly.

"But I really don't know; we have no class in America."

"Now please," he sighed with restraint; "you are holding up the line of people waiting since early morning."

I looked helpless and persisted. "I don't know what to say."

He smiled, "What was your father's occupation then—peasant, worker, intelligentzia?"

"Merchant," I said.

He put down, "Bourgeois!"

The crowd was all agog.

The officer then wrote the address on a piece of paper and handed it to me.

Everybody rejoiced at my pleasure in finding the address. I thanked every one and left the room. The woman with the small-pox face followed. I was afraid she would ask questions which it might not be well for her to ask in that place, so I hurried my steps, but she called to me.

"Listen."

I turned.

"How glad that boy will be at seeing you. So his father is over there!"

"Yes, and his mother is there too."

"Oh, oh, oh, father and mother there and the boy left behind, ooy, ooy!" She shook her head from side to side. "How glad they will be when you take the news to them! God bless you." That was all she had to say.

The uncle's wife was greatly agitated. Such honor

to her little corner, guests from America! But the boy Hrant was not there. He had gone to the next village to see his grandmother, and she repeated the story the other women had told me. "He will not go to school, he will not work. He says, 'My father is American and I don't have to work.' He should go to his parents but he has trachoma and he will not go to the doctor. He says, 'In America they will make me work in a factory; it is better to stay here and spend the American money.' "

The uncle's wife was not much concerned about the fact that I could not see the boy. Like the woman in the Gay-Pay-Oo office, she let her imagination play about the joy the boy's parents in Youngstown would have when they heard my report. She kept saying, "How well you did to come, how glad they will be if you take the news to them."

The next day Hrant K—— came to the hotel with his uncle. He was a big, good-looking boy. He was so overwhelmed with the experience of coming face to face with a person from America that he stood and simply gazed at me with wonder in his eyes. He nodded "yes" or "no" but refused to utter a word. I asked him if he wanted to go to America. He nodded "yes."

"Then why don't you make the necessary effort? Why don't you go to the doctor for your eyes if you have trachoma?"

Then he spoke. "Is it true that my father works on the railroad?"

"Yes, that is true."

"And that he has an automobile all to himself?"

"Yes, that is correct. Your father has a nice car," I said smiling.

"What make is it?" he asked eagerly.

"I believe it is a Nash."

"Oh, it is not a Buick?" He was a bit disappointed.

"Maybe it is a Buick," I said, "but a Nash is considered a very good car in America."

"As good as a Buick?"

"Yes, it is one of the good makes."

"Yes, I want to go to America," he said decisively. "You see I had never seen any one from America before who would tell me something about it. Letters don't matter. I will go to school. I will take the treatments for my eyes, and I will go to America!"

Light of the Morn

The first light of dawn had begun to break through the darkness as we started on our journey to the villages. Soon the skies became rose-tinted and then clear rose-blue.

Here and there the peasants were moving about their early morning work. A few had already gathered around an open fire, warming themselves in the early morning chill. Others were taking the sheep to the hills. The sight of the shepherds and the sheep strangely reminded me of the Christmas morn of my childhood days, when I held my father's hand as he led the family with his lantern, at early dark blue dawn, on our way to the midnight Christmas service at our little church. And always we heard the choir sing as we entered:

Light of the morn,
Sunlight of mercy,
*Dawn in my soul.**

I asked myself as I thought of this hymn: "Is it a New Light which is breaking again through the East by the birth of a great idea, and which again has to be fulfilled at the cost of great sacrifice, suffering and anguish of mind and soul?"

We drove through nearly a hundred villages in nine days. The writer from Moscow had brought a shepherd's flute with him and played the ancient songs of the Armenian troubadour, *Sayat Nova* (seventeenth century). Our favorite one was:

Thy voice is soft, thy speech all sweetness flows,
May he protect who hath thy heart, my love!

The violet is wild, and low of birth,
Rubies are stones, for all their priceless worth;

The moon itself is made of rocks and earth—
All flame thou shinest like the sun, my love.

Within my soul thy hand has placed love's seed;
Thy wiles and coyness make my heart to bleed:

Thy Sayat Nova thou hast slain indeed,
Thine evil fate he bears for thee, my love.†

We stopped frequently and held meetings of the Red Cross chapters in about fourteen villages and towns. Here we saw something of the life of the peasant. We were able to make some comparisons

* From the Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

† By permission, from *Armenian Legends and Poems,* by Zabelle Boyajian, published by E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

ARMENIAN PEASANT GIRL

At the Fountain

between the past and the present and hence imagine possibilities for the immediate future. The past has remained unchanged for perhaps three thousand years, and construction and the Five Year Plan have not yet reached the point of changing materially the mode of living in these primitive villages.

All the peasant dwellings are of the same type, cone-shaped, straw-roofed, windowless huts. The peasant men are still in their old rags, the women are wrapped in their many petticoats and still wear the heavy bejeweled head-dress, with real or artificial gold and silver coins and beads dangling over the veil on the forehead. The little children are likewise dressed in miniature adult clothes but the young girls from fourteen up already have secured white middies and short skirts, and the boys have affected the stylish *kalife*—knickers with Russian boots and Russian blouse. Other symbols of the new era are perceivable in such things as telephones in the offices of every village Soviet and the radio in the public square, where the village hears speeches and music broadcast from Erivan and Moscow. The young people spend their nights listening to the broadcasts and the old people are reluctantly drawn thither, unable to resist the novelty, yet hating and fearing the modernism it portends.

We stopped at a tiny fountain one day, where a cold brook was supplying the drinking water and the washing center for the women of the village. A young girl in a very neat peasant costume, with beads and gold ornaments on her head-dress, came to the fountain with her jug. We asked her a few questions. She was the daughter of a priest and

her brother had been sent to Siberia because he was a koulak and opposed the kol-khoz movement which had begun to be organized in that section of the country. The priest had hanged himself in despair over his son's exile. Here were drama and tragedy, simply told with complete submissiveness and with utter lack of effort to arouse sympathy, for she took us to be officials of the government and she could not expect sympathy from us. We thought we should linger awhile and see if we could gather more of the story.

We met an elderly peasant at the entrance of a rather pretentious looking hut and asked him if he would invite us to his home. He surveyed us with keen, suspicious eyes, and then the same fatalistic submission which we saw in the face of the young girl came over him. What if they were the Gay-Pay-Oo; that was the end, what could he do to prevent the inevitable? So he became diplomatic and gracious, "Indeed, indeed, upon my head welcome a thousand times." He used all the ancient picturesque Armenian terms of hospitality.

Here was the same simple interior. Three young women, the wives of his three sons, two cradles with infants in them, a young man lying sick on a bed spread out on the paved floor, a beautiful young woman, the youngest daughter-in-law and a bride, with her gold pieces in three rows on her forehead, nursing an infant.

"Have you joined the kol-khoz?" asked the official from Moscow.

"No," said the peasant almost defiantly.

"Why don't you wish to join?" we all asked.

"There are twenty of us in the family, all working hands on the small land. We are a kol-khoz ourselves, we don't need to be called by any new-fangled names."

We made connections in our minds. Surely the old man was a friend of the priest who had killed himself. One could see his grief and bewilderment. He, the old patriarch who ruled over the household of twenty souls, stood for things as they were. He took courage and asked what our mission was. We told him we were tourists, one came from Moscow, the other from Paris, and the third from America. His face brightened; he was utterly amazed and the daughters were overwhelmed and dazed. The very idea—people from such far-away places at his very hearth! He was honored. He thanked us for having called. He called to me as we took leave, "Remember us now and then in America!"

As we turned to go we found a crowd at the entrance. There were two things that one could invariably read on the faces of a crowd in Soviet villages: the usual curiosity aroused by the sight of strangers, and wonder mingled with fear as to what business the strangers had with their neighbors.

Faces always brightened when they learned that we were tourists. America never failed to arouse excitement. A young man in the crowd offered to show us the village, the village school, the nursery and other things of the usual variety of the new order, which are an unfailing source of pride to the youth of the country.

A Kurdish boy of fourteen who spoke Armenian looked at me with utter wonder in his eyes. Slowly

shaking his head from side to side, he whispered to himself, "America, America," as if unable to grasp its reality.

"What do you know about America?" I asked.

"I know that it is the country of koulaks and capitalists," said he, in the manner of one making a solemn pronouncement and very proud of his store of knowledge.

The crowd laughed and patted him on the back with enthusiastic approval. Then he stepped a bit nearer, again scanned me, looked bashful and hesitant. It was evident that he had something weighing heavily on his mind.

"Did you want to ask something?" I said.

"Yes," he said, "I want to know if it is true that in America you put a coin in a slot and a door opens and food comes out of the door."

The crowd waited for the answer in tense silence. For it took me some time to gather my thoughts around the magic door which produced food at a moment's notice.

"Yes, it is perfectly true," I said. "It is a restaurant for the workers."

"For the workers!" they all shouted.

That simply added to the unreality of it and made the whole thing altogether unbelievable. You have magic doors opening in Arabian Nights and food coming out on large silver trays carried on the heads of Arabs, but that was for the Sultans of Bagdad!

"But don't you see," I said, "it is a simple mechanical device to give quick service to the workers who have no time to linger over their noon meal. The working man goes and gets it in a hurry. It is

JAMILE

The Kurdish Beauty

the capitalist who can linger over his meal and has to be waited on."

It all seemed very odd to them. They thought every novelty and machine device was the privilege of the capitalist. The workers created it but could never participate in the enjoyment of the things they created.

"Surely that must be a queer country," said an old peasant in deep contemplation.

These were the regular American legends which we met everywhere. The wonder country of machine civilization, the first and foremost rival of the U. S. S. R.; but a country steeped in darkness by the orgy of capitalistic egotism. These were the fundamentals of Soviet education of the masses about America. The specific legends built out of these fundamentals were "Sacco and Vanzetti," "lynching Negroes," and "the ten million unemployed." From the men on the street-car in Moscow to the Kurdish boy in the village of Armenia, these things were known and always repeated about America. The sophisticated individuals, the intelligentzia, the students, had a bit more itemized information. They invariably spoke of the Ku Klux Klan and the monkey trials of university professors, but Sacco and Vanzetti had honorable mention by all.

Often we met traveling peasants on the roads. They walk with cattle or sheep to the next town and market-place. We slowed our car as we caught over the silent mountains the echo of their song—what wild, free, full-hearted singing! No matter what the quality of the voice, it never lacks beauty because it never fails to thrill by the unrepressed

depth of feeling that goes into the song. The voice rises uneven, irregular, but soon spreads the magic of its sincerity over the hills and valleys.

HABERBAN*

The Boy—I have loved your winsome face,
. And your never-fading grace,
. If they give you not to me,
. May God send them black disgrace!
The Girl—Mountain sorrel, fresh with dew,
. Sweets I send, and honey new;
. Is a dainty maid like me
. Fit to wed a youth like you?
The Boy—You are arch, my little maid;
. In four plaits your hair you braid;
. Make no more pretense to me,
. For you love me, I'm afraid.
The Girl—Drive your plough ahead, and go,
Underneath it thistles grow.
. You are reckless, young and wild;
. She is mad would wed you so!
The Boy—Near your house a field I'll sow,
. And I'll stone the ill-starred crow.
. When I have the girl I love
. I'll let all my folly go.

Sometimes they go as far as seven days' journey on foot. They sleep and eat in the villages en route. They always tried to stop our car, often for the sheer joy and wonder of it, and as frequently to ask for cigarettes. Often we stopped to converse and invariably one of our party would ask,

* Translation by Zabelle C. Boyajian. By permission from *Armenian Legends and Poems*. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

"Are you a kol-khoz?"

The answers were always significant. If the peasant replied with a positive and clear-cut, "No," you knew that not only had he not joined but he would not join. He was opposed to it, even though he was not a koulak himself. Then there were those who were enthusiastic, perhaps members of the Party.

"Are you a kol-khoz?" we asked.

"Why shouldn't I be?" he answered.

Others were cautious and diplomatic and did not commit themselves so easily. The answers were evasive.

"We had cows and sheep but we have only one ox left now."

"What became of them, uncle?" we asked.

"I don't know. I just don't have any cattle now, and I have eleven heads to feed."

Through these responses to our questions it was interesting to see how human nature, as always, aligned itself into social classes according to economic status and perhaps temperament. From his answers we could easily place our peasant in one of the three classes into which the communists have officially divided them—the koulak, the middle peasant and the poor peasant. The koulak is the exploiting and rich peasant and outright opposed to collective farming. The middle peasant owns his own land and works on it himself (does not exploit someone else's labor); he is not badly off and therefore is vacillating in his attitude toward joining the collectives. The poor peasant is the hired laborer on the land or one who has a patch of land but no

live stock or implements. He has nothing to lose and is the backbone of the collectives.

In the evenings we stopped at the big villages for Red Cross meetings. The leaders explained to the audience at length that the Red Cross flag had no connection with the traditions of Christianity; that it was simply the reverse of the Swiss flag, therefore the Soviet Union had decided to keep the old emblem because it was internationally recognized in time of war; and that since the Red Cross did the work of mercy for the wounded in time of war, the Soviet Union could not afford to endanger the life of a single Red soldier by changing the emblem. It was apparent that this was educational work from "the center" in answer to demands from the militant proletariat, or the "fighting atheists," to change the Red Cross emblem and the name of the organization to something more in keeping with the spirit of communism.

The greatest amount of freedom for discussion is allowed in these meetings and of course there is no time limit set either for the speeches or for the meetings. The workers are encouraged to speak and take their time in developing their thinking. Many of them express themselves with great clarity. At these meetings frequent references were made by the speakers to "American observer." At first I failed to comprehend the connection but soon discovered that it was a standing joke. It is often used in speech making. When any one wants to say, "I am not a member, I came as an outsider but I wish to speak," some one from the audience calls, "Oh, you are an American observer then!" Every one

SIRMA
A Turkish Bride in the Armenian Forests

understands this joke and the audience without fail responds with laughter.

Our next stop of importance was the village of Allahverdi, the center of the copper mines. For the first time in my life I was to see a real mine. The engineer Hazarian was our escort. He had been in the United States to study the copper mines of Arizona. We had to go down through a shaft and then walk three miles until we arrived at the dug-out. The tunnel was damp and dark and the walk was very wearisome. A Kurdish youth who spoke Armenian was our guide. He perceived my drooping spirits and tried to cheer me up.

"We walk this twice a day. Once you get used to it you don't mind it so much," he explained hopefully.

At last we arrived. Eight workers were seated, leaning against the wall of the mine, and were having their lunch. The mine was lighted by electricity. To my surprise the men looked cheerful and ruddy and their hopeful countenances revived my spirits. On the way back one of the carriers of the ore walked with us.

"Why are you working in a mine?" I asked him.

"Where should I work? Everywhere labor is the same."

"But is it not harder in a mine? It is dark and damp in here."

"But some one must do the work, and I happen to be the one."

By this time I suspected that there was a hidden source of optimism here.

"Are you a member of the Party?" I asked.

"Yes ma'am." He sang the words!

We all laughed with him.

"Then that is the reason for your enthusiasm?"

"Why not? The Party is my salvation. I am thirty-eight years old. Three years ago I knew neither how to read nor how to write. Now I am literate. I am the president of the club. I work six hours. I go home and change and dress. I have plenty of time in the evening for myself. I go to the club, I get myself educated. I work four days and rest on the fifth."

We stopped midway in the dark tunnel and listened spellbound to the words of this child of the triumphant proletariat. His eyes sparkled as he talked.

On our return the darkness of the tunnel seemed to be lit up by the hope in this worker's eyes. The three-mile walk back had somehow lost its tedium for me.

In the evening the political director of the mines gave a party for us in his room. The room serves as a study and frequently as a hotel for out-of-town guests. There were seven of us that evening. Besides our party of four, the technical director, an engineer and a Russian aviator were invited. We had *shish-kebab* for dinner and cognac for drink. The party lasted until three in the morning, when we had to take the train for Tzorakes. There our trip was to reach its climax.

Miracles of Communistic Faith

"Tzorakes" was the new word on every one's lips. It is a narrow and long valley tucked in be-

tween rugged and bare mountains of majestic beauty. The river Tepet flows through the valley. This spot has been chosen for the giant hydro-electric development of the Armenian Republic. It is the star enterprise of the Five Year Plan of Armenia. It will cost eleven million rubles and will have thirty-five thousand horsepower. Two thousand workers' barracks have been built in the valley and a new village named Tzorakes [Valley Stream] has risen almost overnight.

We arrived at seven in the morning from Allahverdi. As it was not possible to traverse these roads by automobile, our car was to meet us in the evening, on the other side of the mountain. We walked into the workers' restaurant to warm ourselves from the chilly October morning. Soon the workers began filing in, and when they learned that we were guests they invited us to have breakfast with them.

"The tunnel, the tunnel," every one told us; "you must see the tunnel." This is their new miracle. It has been bored into the heart of a rocky mountain, and through it the water from one side of the mountain will flow to the other. One of the workers who sat at our table explained the miracle. One gang of workers had started to bore from one side, and another gang from the opposite side of the mountain. They were told by the engineer that eventually the two gangs, working at separate ends, would meet in the tunnel and the opening would then be completed. No one believed that there could be such precise "guess work" through the heart of a mountain, but it came true. On the day when the two points met and the tunnel was opened from one side

to the other, the workers cheered wildly and declared the day a holiday. It is still the source of great wonder and joy to every one.

The president of the workers' union, a young man of twenty-nine, came to meet us. He offered to take us through the tunnel. I was very tired and declared that I had seen many such tunnels in America and I knew that this one was exactly like any other and that I had no desire to walk through it. I saw that my refusal hurt their feelings. "But this is an Armenian tunnel," said one of them. "The other side of the mountain is very beautiful; you should not miss it."

While waiting for the manager and the engineer to arrive we conversed with the workers. The same alert and enthusiastic interest that we had seen in the copper mines permeated this group. Each worker knows everything about the whole of the works. He knows what it is to cost, how it is built, how long it will take to complete it. We walked through two and a half miles of tunnel and here again we forgot our weariness in the contagion of the enthusiasm and optimism that surrounded us.

New Villages with Ancient Names

The little model villages built by the refugees from Turkish Armenia were among the most stirring of all the sights of the new life. These villages have been built mostly by money sent from the Armenians In America. Each village community in the U. S. A. has raised its own funds to build a new home, with the ancient name of the old and ruined village transferred to the new. The Armenians of Arapkir, for

NEW ARAPKIR

Model Village Built by the Armenians of Old Arapkir in America

instance, a picturesque old textile city in Turkey which has sent a good many enterprising Armenians to America, has now a counterpart named "New Arapkir," a half-hour's distance from Erivan.

The new village is happily located on a plateau between the two great mountains of Armenia, Ararat on the east and Arakatz (also known as the Alakyaz) on the north and the west. One of the village poets has called it "the balcony of Armenia." Building of the New Arapkir was begun in 1925, with the land given free by the Armenian government and the money almost entirely supplied by the Armenians in America from Old Arapkir. The population of the village was nine hundred at the time I visited it. The representative of the New Arapkir Association was waiting in Moscow to obtain visas for the remaining seven hundred in the old country who wanted to join the new settlement. There were already one hundred and fifty houses built.

It is a model village. The houses are two-family dwellings of stone, of four and five rooms each. Each family built its own house with its own labor. The money of the Arapkir Association sent from the United States was used for general construction, for the necessary engineering and architectural work, for roads, for electricity, for water supply, for a bridge, a school, a kindergarten and two factories.

The little nursery was donated by an Armenian doctor from Anamosa, Iowa. His name is written with large letters in front of the nursery building.

"The gift of Haghinian, an American doctor."

There are two factories, a stocking and knitwear factory, and a textile factory where the old home

industry of lovely tapestry in old Armenian design and colors has been transplanted from the Old Arapkir to the New.

The older people look like veritable pilgrims, the women in their native costumes, with ornaments in their hair and the inevitable gold earrings. They are looking forward to the future in order to forget the past, but the young people are already full of the present. Of the nine hundred population nearly all the four hundred and fifty adults are working in the factories. There are one hundred and fifty children of the ages from one to sixteen and the young people aged from sixteen to thirty number two hundred and fifty. The whole place is alive with new hope and pulsating wth the promise of achievement.

I have in my possession a letter written by a young man from this village of New Arapkir to his brother in Philadelphia. This letter seems to me to be the best interpreter of that rather exaggerated self-confidence which amuses and baffles the foreign observer. It gives very tellingly the picture in the minds of the communists, of a starving world outside and of the hopeful if not too comfortable world in which they find themselves.

The letter reads:

"Dear Brother:

"We are well but are thinking of you and are saddened at the thought of the hard times you have been having. I am well informed on political matters, especially about America. We know that the workers there are dying by the thousand every day from starvation, while here, on the contrary, we need working hands. If you wish to come to join us, write immediately. If you have no money for daily bread and travel expenses, do not hesitate to write. I shall immediately

take steps to send you what is necessary. If you wish to have a secure and happy life you can find it only here with us. While I write this, my mother is shedding tears over you, as we have not heard from you for a long time and she thinks you must have perished from starvation in America."

So the "starving Armenia" of ten years ago now turns with pity to a starving America!

The New Symbol of Armenia

My childhood vision of Armenia as a nation was represented by the picture of a woman in black sitting, chin in hand, on top of ruins, long black hair falling down her shoulders, while she bemoaned the fate of her children. To the outside world, during the last half-century and later during the great war, Armenia was known as "The Starving," and the symbol before the public was a skeletoned, a horror-stricken child, an orphan of massacred parents, who appealed to the world for pity and charity.

During my visit, the Republic of Soviet Armenia was making great preparation to celebrate its tenth anniversary, on November 29, 1931, and on that occasion one of the young proletarian poets read in a large public meeting a poem dedicated to that event. I was present at that meeting. It was a very stirring poem and received a great ovation, but what arrested my attention was the completely revolutionized picture of Armenia as the world had known it.

This time the young poet evoked a new symbol—"The Golden-Haired Lad"—a simile taken from pre-Christian Armenian literature, where one of the national gods was described as having hair of fire

and eyes of light. The poem is called "A Ballad to Soviet Armenia."

Let a thousand horns blow and a thousand drums beat!
Morning has come, day is flooded with light!
Let a thousand horns blow and a thousand drums beat!
This ten-year-old laddie, of whom is he born?
Whence the fire of his hair and the light of his eyes?

This ten-year-old boy whose hair gleams in the sun,
Whose hair blows in the wind, whose eyes shine like the light,
Has brought hope to our hearts, they are now all ablaze.
Let a thousand horns blow and a thousand drums beat!
Morning has come, day is flooded with light!

We hail you as hero, our ten-year-old lad!
You came to the world through our travail and pain,
Ours is the blood that runs through your veins,
Through our strivings and hopes you grew to ten years—
Hail, Soviet Armenia, our ten-year-old lad!

This was the new picture and the new song of the Republic. It is not "mere poetry." It is the poetry of the new day.

The total impress of this hopeful and buoyant life is very contagious while one is in its midst. Life values become completely reversed. The dearth of material things, even dire necessities, loses its overpowering grip on the imagination. Shabbiness of appearance becomes a trifle. How strange it seemed,

while I was in Armenia, that once I walked the streets of New York for days in search of a becoming hat!

When one leaves the Soviet Union and steps into the glittering civilization of the capitalistic world, the question that beats upon the brain is: What is good for the people, social security or freedom of individual action?

When I saw the modernistic façade of the new cinema theater in Moscow I felt instantly that it summed up for me the total effect of Soviet life as I had found it everywhere in the Union. The façade was made entirely of black shining marble and electrically lighted glass in alternate broad horizontal stripes. It seemed a true symbol of the Soviet dream of the future state. No glittering White Way may be found anywhere in the Union. Nowhere will there be accumulated and piled-up abundance on the one side and accumulated misery and despair on the other. For every one, life is to be made up of alternate shadow and light. All the strata of society will be made equally secure against the hazards of poverty and old age. The shadows must fall equally on all who have no control over their own inner human weaknesses. Each individual, therefore, must be made safe against his own human weakness and temptation—from inordinate ambition, from greed, from desire for power and from socially wasteful acquisition. From this standpoint there has never been such real equality of the people within a commonwealth anywhere in the world's history as is already realized to a large measure within the Soviet Union.

It is this feeling of security that has turned a veritable death house where the Armenian people were doomed to perish, into a house of resurrected people with hope written large on their faces.

When I went through the chief park in Erivan I was told that eleven years ago it was littered with the dead bodies of starving people. Today the best open-air restaurant in town is located in that park and people sit around on the benches and enjoy the mellow warmth of the autumn sun.

ASTRAKHAN
CASPIAN SEA
TAURIDA
ROSTOV
SEA OF AZOV
STAVROPOL
KUBAN
KHERNOMORSKAYA
CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS
BLACK SEA
TRANSCAUCASIA
KUTAIS
GEORGIA
TIFLIS
BATUM
BATUM
KARS
ALEXANDROPOL
KARS
AZERBAIJAN
BAKU
BAKU
TURKEY
ARMENIA
SEVANA LAKE
ERIVAN
ERIVAN
ARAXES RIVER
MT. ARARAT
LAKE VAN
ARAXES RIVER

DATE DUE

APR 2 6 1971

JUL 3 1 1969

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

DS165 .Y43
The red flag at Ararat,
Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 00135 0125